



THE INDEPENDENT

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24 PAGE BROADSHEET REVIEW

Drugs: we've never had it so bad
THURSDAY REVIEW FRONT

Godzilla: the 400ft turkey

The model way to beat dyslexia
EDUCATION

Huge deficit looms, warn City experts

GORDON BROWN'S generous three-year spending plan is a calculated gamble with the economy, an authoritative study warned last night as the Government came under fire over its £37bn increase in welfare state spending.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, the leading accountancy firm, warned that slower-than-expected economic growth could blow a hole in the Government's arithmetic.

The forecast came as it emerged that the rise in welfare state spending will dwarf the £21bn extra for the NHS and £19bn for education - challenging the Government over its election pledge to curb welfare spending.

The row over welfare opened up a central fault line between the Government and the Tories, which promises to be the key battleground for the next election. Tony Blair, defending the higher spending in angry Commons clashes with William Hague, challenged the Tory leader to say which schools or hospitals he would close to cut public spending.

Whitehall sources confirmed that the Government will be increasing spending over the next three years by £27bn on the welfare state, with £14bn extra on pensions, £7bn on disability, £4bn on help to children, and £2bn on the unemployed and income support. The Tories said the figures showed an additional £10bn had been concealed in the Treasury figures for working family tax credit.

The row overshadowed the announcement by David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, that the Government was bringing forward its pledge to reduce class sizes by 2000. It also threatens to cloud the announcement today of the extra cash for the NHS by Frank Dobson, The Secretary of State for Health will say that exemptions to prescription charges will be protected, and that charges will be raised by no more than

BY COLIN BROWN and LEA PATERSON

the rate of inflation for the next three years.

Warning that Labour intends to make the issue part of its election strategy for a second term, Mr Blair told MPs: "The Conservative Party, having decided to oppose our plans now... will be going into the next general election saying that what we're doing for the schools and hospitals is providing more - they would be providing less. That is their choice and they will have to live with it."

The Tories used the figures

creases of more than £5 in income support for the poorest pensioners to be announced tomorrow.

PricewaterhouseCoopers said the Government's forecasts rely on a number of crucial assumptions about the development of the economy, including the likely rate of economic growth over the next three years.

If the economy slows faster than the Chancellor is expecting, the Government will receive less in tax receipts and will have to lay out more on social security benefits. PricewaterhouseCoopers has estimated that if economic growth stagnates next year, and only recovers slowly in 2000, the Government could be running an annual budget deficit of £20bn by 2001-02.

The Government, by contrast, is predicting that, in 2001-02, its books will balance and it will not have to borrow to finance its spending plans.

Rosemary Radcliffe, head of economics at PricewaterhouseCoopers, said: "The Chancellor is taking a calculated gamble on a reasonably soft landing for the economy. If there is a hard landing, tax revenues will fall and cyclically sensitive social security spending and debt-interest payments will rise. This could blow something of a hole in the Chancellor's fiscal arithmetic."

PricewaterhouseCoopers also criticised the presentation of the new spending plans. John Hawksworth, head of macroeconomics, echoed concerns expressed by numerous MPs, saying: "The figures are not transparent. There are many unexplained differences in definition as well as accounting adjustments. It makes it difficult for people to see the true picture."

Despite these concerns, the FTSE-100 powered to a record close of 6151.5 yesterday, partly helped by positive sentiment in global stock markets.

INSIDE

Blunkett's plans page 2
Parliament, page 8
Leading article and David Aaronovitch, Review, page 3
Hamish McRae, Review, page 4
Business page 16

to claim that the Chancellor's spending plans were already beginning to unravel, just 24 hours after being announced in the Commons. It raises fears that the Government has run into trouble over its plans for reforming the welfare state, although the savings have not been included in the Chancellor's spending plans.

The Cabinet welfare reform committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, met last week to thrash out solutions to the intractable rise in housing benefit, but any prospect of action has been stalled until autumn at least. There are also delays in announcing radical reforms to the state pension, child benefit, and disability benefit.

The Prime Minister spent the day strongly defending the rise in spending on welfare, insisting that it included in-



Tony Blair addressing parents, pupils and staff during a visit yesterday to a nursery school in Camden, north London. New funding announced yesterday aims to double the number of nursery places for three-year-olds by 2002 John Voos

Woman is pregnant by sperm of dead man

BEING DEAD is now no obstacle to fathering a child. A surgeon in Los Angeles has for the first time made a woman pregnant using sperm taken from a man who was already dead.

After sperm were extracted from Bruce Vernoff, a 35-year-old Californian who had died 24 hours earlier from a reaction to medication, samples were injected into an egg removed from Mr Vernoff's widow, Gaby. The fertilised egg was then implanted in Mrs Vernoff's womb.

Although the extraction is not against any law in the United States, the fact that it has been done could inflame debates within the medical, legal and religious community over the rights of families to use genetic material of relatives who are unconscious or even dead.

A survey there showed that there have been almost 50 requests to extract sperm from dead men in two years, and the numbers are growing rapidly. In Britain, the procedure would be illegal, as Mr Vernoff had not been able to give "effective consent" for the use of his sperm before he died.

Three years after her husband died, in July 1995, Mrs Vernoff is now one month pregnant, although she has expressed a wish to avoid publicity until the end of the third month of the pregnancy.

"In the UK, if someone hasn't given their informed consent before they die, their sperm cannot be stored or used," said Suzanne McCarthy, chief executive of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which licenses the storage and use of eggs and sperm. "It is all about respect-

BY CHARLES ARTHUR Technology Editor

ing people's genetic material."

But Wallace Vernoff, Bruce's father and a lawyer, said before the pregnancy was confirmed, commented: "I would oppose legislation that would regulate a negative for everyone. What if a plan is made by a young couple and there is an untimely death? How do you get written consent other than perhaps from those who knew him?"

The sperm extraction was carried out by Dr Cappy Rothman, a urologist at the Century City Hospital in Los Angeles. He thinks the procedure has a positive effect. He told *New Scientist* magazine: "It gives people hope and lessens the pain of suddenly losing a loved one."

Dr Rothman has already carried out the extraction for the families of about a dozen dead men. In these cases, the families simply wanted to keep the sperm as a memento, rather than to use it. But there are signs that families may try to extract sperm from dead children or relatives, to create the children or grandchildren they never had.

In the United Kingdom, arguments over the ethics of using sperm or eggs from a dead person found a focus in the case of Diane Blood, who wanted to become pregnant by sperm taken from her husband while he was in a coma. He died without regaining consciousness. The HFEA argued that as he had not given "informed consent" to that use, Mrs Blood should not be allowed to use the sperm. She won her case in the Appeal Court, and is now pregnant by her husband's sperm.

After 80 years, the Tsar's final journey

THIS morning, at 8am local time, the startlingly small oak coffins containing the bones of the Romanovs will be carried out of a building in Yekaterinburg where they have lain in transparent plastic containers for seven years, next door to the morgue, while politicians, scientists, clerics and their own relatives wrangled over their authenticity and fate.

A military band will strike up as Nicholas, his wife, Alexandra, and daughters Olga, Tatiana and Anastasia are carried across the newly laid tarmac drive and loaded into a minivan, followed by coffins containing the family doctor, their cook, valet and chamber maid.

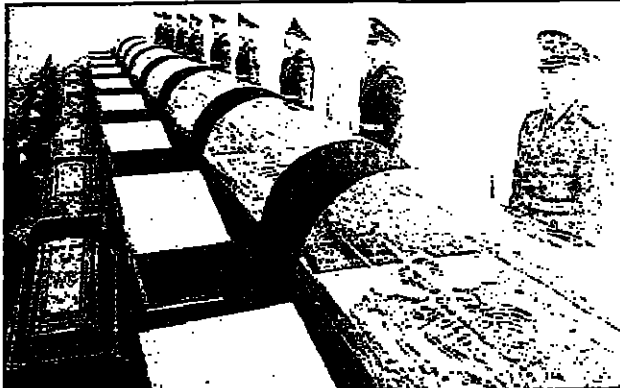
These acid-charred royal remnants will be driven to a faded Orthodox church where, as bells chime, they will be carried inside and placed by the altar. There will be two 15-minute liturgies, separated by two hours, when the citizens of

BY PHIL REEVES in Yekaterinburg

Yekaterinburg can pay respects to the family whom their forefathers killed. The remains will then be driven to the airport and flown to St Petersburg for reburial tomorrow.

Although the events of 1918 will seem remote to most of those in the church, a reminder is close by. Over the road is Ipatiev House, where the Romanovs were imprisoned for 78 days. At midnight on 16 July 1918, as the White army drew closer, the Romanovs' executioner, a Chekist commander, ordered the family into the basement. He told them he wanted a photograph to prove to Moscow they were alive, so they dutifully lined up. Minutes later they were shot, beaten and bayoneted to death.

It was perhaps the ugliest episode in the history of this particular part of the Urals,



The Romanov's remains awaiting reburial

until a few years ago a closed city because of its weapons plants. But you would not know it. The place will crack on as usual, concentrating on frantic renovations for next month's 275th anniversary.

Conversation after conversation yesterday revealed that Yekaterinburg is either indifferent to its past, or largely ig-

norant of it (the history of the Romanovs got short shrift in Soviet classrooms), or quietly, tentatively uneasy about it. Some are relieved to see an end. Yet most seem oblivious to the enormity of the events that underpin today's proceedings.

Evidence of this lies at the site of the murders. It is a weed-choked vacant lot, surrounded by a makeshift wall of concrete blocks.

There is a rusting iron cross, painted white, on which roses, carnations and lilies have been entwined. But yesterday there was only a handful of flowers, no more.

Next to it stands a rickety wooden pavilion in front of a patch of mud, rutted by truck wheels. "You should have seen this place a couple of years ago," said Anatoly Gonsikov, a worn-looking 54-year-old with a large ginger-white beard who goes to the site every day to do what he can. "There used to be rubbish everywhere."

Trash is still easily found, though not on the ground.

Fly posters bearing the red swastika-like symbol of the neo-fascist Russian National Unity party have been stuck on the concrete fence, in case visitors should need reminding of the ugly fractures within the new Russia.

There are, it must be conceded, plans by the region to build a church on the site of Ipatiev house, which was demolished in 1977 by Boris Yeltsin, then the local party boss, acting on the orders of the head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. But they have been around for years, and nothing has happened yet.

All there is to be found is a tiny wooden shrine next door, presided over by a middle-aged woman who simply calls herself "Lyubov". Love. It is dedicated not to Nicholas and Alexandra, but to the former empress's elder sister, Elizabeth. Six months ago Love explains, it was bombed. "There will always be people who are hostile to all this," she says quietly. As Russia's politicians and clerics scurry to distance themselves from today's events, the start of the Romanovs' tardy journey to St Petersburg, Love is proving spot-on.

INSIDE
FULL CONTENTS
PAGE 2
TODAY'S TV
REVIEW, PAGE 24

HOME NEWS
Two homeless managers may be charged with allowing their centre to be used for the drug supply

POLITICS
MPs with free parking passes for the House of Commons may have to pay for the privilege

FOREIGN NEWS
Four years of effort to set up a credible international criminal court is on the brink of collapse

BUSINESS
The FTSE 100 index shrugged off renewed rate rise fears to close at a record high

SPORT
Rangers have signed Andrei Kanchelskis, the ex-Manchester United winger, for £5.5m

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The Holocaust left her orphaned, penniless and alone. Now she'll get just £400 from the Nazis' looted gold

BY LOUISE JURY

LORE ROBINSON'S world was torn apart by the Holocaust. She lost her parents, her family fortune, her life as a girl from a prosperous Jewish family with a happy future ahead.

She was saved from death by the *Kindertransport* - the secret trainloads of children rescued from Germany and taken to safety.

But left penniless in Britain, she had to build a new existence very different from the one her childhood had prepared her for.

Like many other survivors, she scrimped and saved, got married, bore a son and a daughter and became not the most prosperous of the victims, nor the most desperate.

Now 75 and living with her husband in south London, she is one of those who stand to benefit from the distribution of the £1m fund announced by Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, as a goodwill gesture at last December's conference on Nazi gold.

After months of consultation between Jewish groups, details of how the money will be spent were announced yesterday. For people like Mrs Robinson, it will probably mean a payment of £400. Most of the money, it has been agreed, should go overseas.

Two-thirds is to go to providing medical care for needy Holocaust survivors in Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Moldova - the "double victims" who faced victimisation under Communism after the horrors of Nazism.

The remaining third, around £330,000, will go to people in Britain. Although most recipients will be Jewish, both the Foreign Office and the Board of Deputies of British Jews yesterday stressed applications from other victims, such as the Romanians, were welcome.

Around 500 people in need have been identified already after Jewish welfare organisations circulated questionnaires. Criteria include the same baseline as apply for the receipt of housing benefit.

For many, the money will be some help. But as Ben Helfgott, chairman of the 45 Aid Society which helps survivors, said: "It is really symbolic. Nothing on earth can pay back what we have lost."

Yet there is genuine gratitude from the British Jews who feel Britain has taken the lead. Fourteen other countries pledged a total of \$57m to the fund set up by Mr Cook, although only Sweden and Poland have yet paid up.

Lord Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said: "This distribution is a shining and worthy example to all nations. I am delighted that Britain is now the first contributor to start distribution from the fund to needy victims."

For people like Lore Robinson, it will be only the second sum she has ever received for the horror of losing her parents, her education, the life she had enjoyed.

In 1965, all those who were children under the Nazis in Germany received a small payment in lieu of their lost education. She cannot remember now, but thinks it was perhaps a few hundred pounds.

She received nothing for the loss of her parents who had believed they might be able to escape to a new life in America.

When Mrs Robinson left on the *Kindertransport* train, her parents nearly had their visas arranged. Her father, who had won the Iron Cross fighting for Germany in the First World War, had run his own factory and her mother had had family property that she had sold.

They paid an enormous sum to receive their exit papers, but were then left to wait for two days in Holland for their boat.

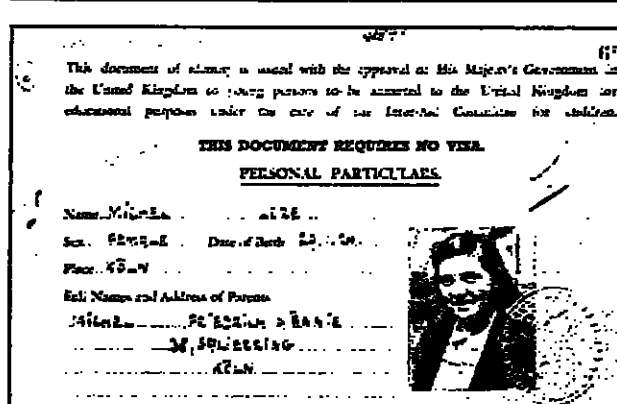
Hitler invaded, their boxes of luggage were bombed in Rotterdam and they were despatched to concentration camps. Her mother died in 1945, her father survived a little longer, just in time to see his daughter once more before the effect of the camps claimed his life.

In England, Mrs Robinson had arrived in 1939 at the age of 15 "with a little case and 10 marks".

She was first taken in by a Jewish family in the East End of London. But they did not send her to school as promised and made her do the housework.

Her brother, who had escaped on an earlier train and was living in Cambridge, asked the Christian organiser there to help his sister. After 14 months, she passed her matriculation, but with no money to fund further education, took the only career she could see open to her. She became a nurse.

Neville Nagler, director general of the Board of Deputies, agreed. "They are in the twilight of their lives. Many of them have suffered unimaginable hardships and horrors. Nothing can ever compensate them. But even a modest payment can provide some tangible benefit. It can also remind them that the world outside still cares and has not forgotten them."



Lore Robinson at home (left), and as a young girl with her father (top). Mrs Robinson shares some of the compensation being distributed from the fund set up by Robin Cook after the Nazi gold conference
Peter Macdiarmid

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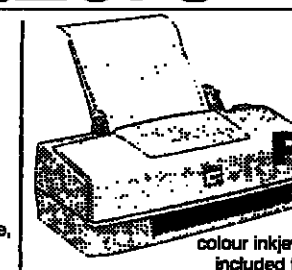
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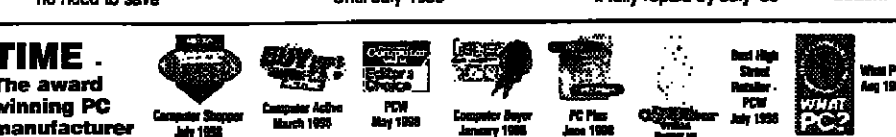
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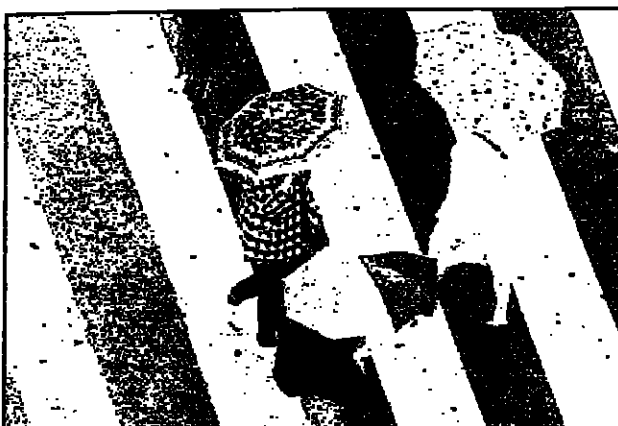
St Swithun forecasts 40 days of rain from beyond the grave

BY WILLIAM HARSTON

IT'S METEOROLOGICALLY nonsense, ecclesiastically dubious and even spell it wrong, but yesterday was St Swithun's Day. Most parts of the country had at least a spot of drizzle, so the good superstitious folk of this land will therefore be expecting rain for the next 40 days. For according to the legend:

*St Swithun's Day, if thou dost rain,
For forty days it will remain;
St Swithun's Day, if thou be fair,
For forty days 'twill rain na mair*

The tale dates back to 15 July 971, when the bones of St Swithun, bishop of Winchester, (the Dictionary of National Biography firmly castigates "Swithun" as a misspelling)



Rainy day, 40 more to come ... or maybe not

were scheduled to be moved from an unmarked grave outside his church to a consecrated site within the walls of building. On that day, however, it poured with rain, and continue to do so for the next 40 days, which was taken as a sign

that his bones preferred to remain where they were.

That, however, seems to be a piece of 16th century romanticism at variance with contemporary accounts of the event. Back in the tenth century, Swithun was thought to

have been overjoyed at having his bones reburied, and was credited with hundreds of miracles which he performed in gratitude.

The long-range weather forecast associated with Swithun also fails to stand up to scrutiny. An analysis was published in 1894 calculating the average number of rainy days in the 40 days following 15 July. After a wet St Swithun's Day, there were 18.5 rainy days, while for a dry 15 July, the rainy score was slightly higher at 19.25.

Whatever the statistics show, St Swithun did give Britain its own meteorological saint's day to match those of St Medard (8 June) in France, St Godeheve (16 July) in Belgium and the Day of the Seven Sleepers (27 June) in Germany which carried a similar tradition of 40-day instant weather forecasts. And none of those work either.

RUC raids spell an end to Drumcree

THE ORANGE encampment at Drumcree was dramatically cleared yesterday, with doubts raised as to whether the marchers will be allowed back. The security forces acted after discovering "suspicious devices" during a search of the site, although senior Orangemen insisted they would return.

For the first time since the stand-off began 10 days ago, police moved into the Orange lines and arrested six people. A further 14 were also held elsewhere in connection with items discovered at the scene.

The fields around the besieged church were left deserted after hardliners were cleared away.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary later displayed their findings including implements for blast bombs, illegal fireworks which had been fired from mortars. A firearm, including spent ammunition, was also found along with crossbows and catapults.

"I would hope that the protest is over," said Brid Rodgers, the SDLP's Assembly member for the Portadown area.

"People recognise that the rule of law and order and the decision of the Parades Commission has been upheld and that has been welcomed."

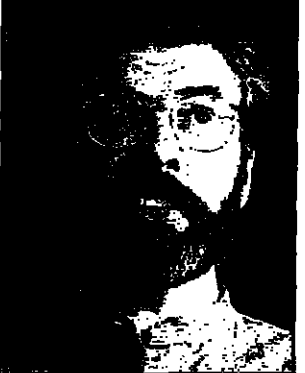
The operation followed another night of violence in which officers had been attacked with petrol bombs, glass bombs and bricks. Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams yesterday visited Drumcree to "show solidarity with the people of Garvaghy Road". He said the siege by the Orangemen was "outrageous".

Last night it was becoming increasingly apparent that the Orange protest had been confronted and faced down by the authorities. In a sign of the confidence now being felt by the government most of the extra 1,000 troops sent into Northern Ireland before the Drumcree march will now return to their

BY KIM SENGUPTA

mainland bases. There were also indications yesterday that there was serious internal rifts within the Orange Order. Claims by Portadown Orangemen that the murderous arson attack which claimed the lives of the three young Quinn brothers was the result of "collusion" between security forces and paramilitaries met widespread anger.

The RUC dismissed the al-



Gerry Adams: 'Solidarity'

legations contemptuously and the Quinn family, who had buried the dead boys on Tuesday, were said to be deeply upset.

Support was gathering for the Rev William Bingham who had been vilified by hard liners for urging fellow Orangemen to abandon the stand-off at Drumcree following the weekend murders.

The Rev Dr Warren Porter, Co Londonderry Grand Chaplain, condemned Joel Patton, leader of the Spirit of Drumcree Group, for barracking Rev Bingham on Monday. He said: "The interruption of his service of worship and the abuse of a young Minister of the Gospel by Joel Patton... was a blatant breach of Orange Principles not to mention the question of ap-

propriate manners."

Dr Porter added that this year's July 12 celebration had been totally overshadowed by the death of the three little Catholic boys. Many Orangemen had been broken-hearted.

A senior Protestant clergyman in Dublin accused the Orange Order of contributing to the deaths. The Very Rev John Paterson, the Dean of Dublin's Christ Church of Ireland Cathedral, who was brought up in Portadown said: "The three children died all because of a couple of hundred yards of road."

"Decent members of the Orange Order may not bear direct responsibility, and most will regret this tragedy. But their unyielding attitude and support they are receiving from off-line thugs means that their hands are not clean."

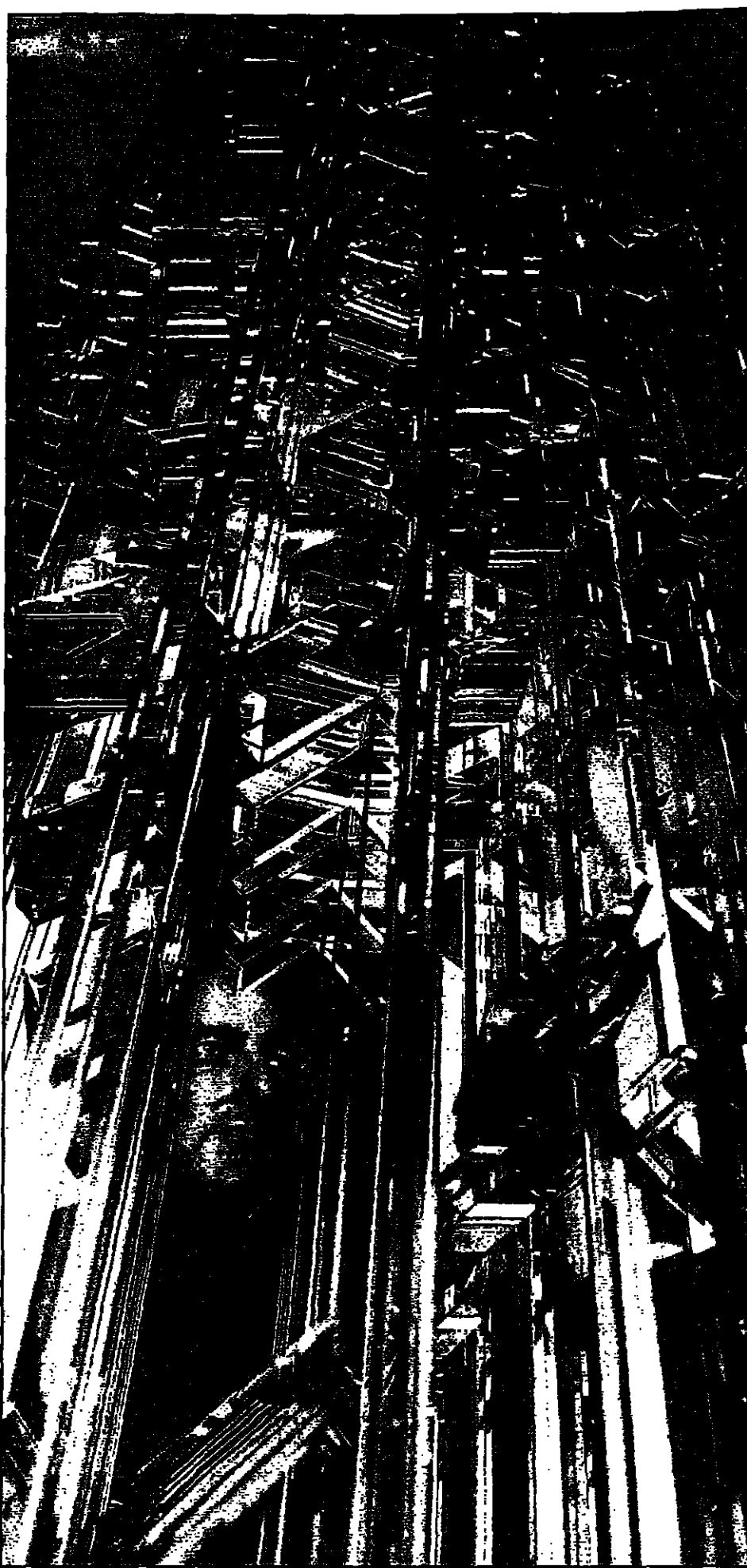
One of the men being questioned about the murder of the three brothers was yesterday released without charge.

The officer in charge of the investigation Det Chief Supt Hamilton Houston stressed there was "absolutely no substance" to rumours that anyone being questioned over the murders had any connections with the family of the dead boys.

He added that "savagely and sickening" sectarianism was the only motive being investigated for the murders.

In further surprising developments it emerged that Ian Paisley, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, is sitting in committees of the New Assembly with Sinn Féin members who have IRA convictions.

Mr Paisley and his party colleagues Nigel Dodds and Gregory Campbell attended a Standing Orders Committee meeting with Sinn Féin's Francis Molloy, Conor Murphy who was jailed in 1982 for membership of the IRA's junior wing, and John Kelly convicted of IRA membership in 1979.



Artist Peter Aldridge yesterday inspecting his 3m-tall glass sculpture 'A Moment in Time', newly installed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Nicola Kurtz

Sandhurst cadet who collapsed on exercise dies

BY ELISA CRAWFORD

A CADET at Sandhurst military academy who collapsed during an exercise two weeks ago died yesterday. A second man was in hospital after being taken ill during a similar exercise on Tuesday.

Graham Holmes, 23, died of multi-organ failure in the intensive care unit of Frimley Park Hospital, Frimley, Surrey. His mother was at his bedside.

He collapsed at the end of a seven-mile training run which he had completed with 35 other cadets on 30 June.

An Army spokeswoman disclosed that Mr Holmes had suffered from heat exhaustion when he started his training.

Major Gill Prowse, based at Aldershot, said: "He started in September 1997 and was taken ill two or three weeks into his training."

"He received medical treatment for heat exhaustion and he restarted his training in January this year. He then completed his basic training by Easter, took a holiday, and was in the middle of his intermediate training."

Maj Prowse said there had been no signs of a return of his medical problems.

The 800 trainee soldiers at the Royal Military Academy do the exercises in combat gear, carrying rucksacks loaded with equipment.

Adrian Muir, 22, from Kingston, Jamaica, who collapsed on Tuesday, was said yesterday to be in a stable condition at Frimley Park hospital.

Major Ian Park-Weir, in charge of protocol and public relations at Sandhurst, said that it was "very rare" for cadets to collapse during exercises.

Speaking before Maj Prowse revealed Mr Holmes' previous difficulties, he added: "We are extremely upset by this and everyone is very sad. Graham was a very good cadet, who was

doing well and had no problems. While this type of incident is rare, we take all proper medical precautions during exercises."

"Obviously everyone is different and we will have to wait for the outcome of the post mortem before knowing what the cause of death was."

"These training exercises happen all the time and of course cadets are under pressure to complete the runs."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said the training runs, or "marches" as they are known, would have been conducted by a physical training instructor trained in first aid.

The cadets carry water and make mandatory water stops, as well as drinking plenty of water before the exercises.

A support vehicle can be summoned by the supervising instructor who is equipped with a mobile phone. The spokesman said: "The Army has changed a lot in the last 30 years and it is no longer the case that instructors push people beyond their limits."

Officers were keenly awaiting the results of a post mortem to find out more about what went wrong in Mr Holmes' case.

Cadets complete three terms of training, including junior, intermediate and senior. Mr Holmes had wanted to join the Royal Engineers, known as the Sappers.

He was half way through his year-long course, at the end of which he would have been made an officer.

Officers and cadets at the college were said to be extremely upset by his death.

He was described as a "good bloke and a good prospect".

The academy, which gives initial training before officers are commissioned, was formed in 1946 when the Royal Military College Sandhurst merged with the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich.

New concerns over pesticide

CONTROLS ON the use of pesticides in food are being reviewed in response to fears that children are at greater risk than adults, the Government disclosed yesterday.

Lord Donoughue, agriculture spokesman, was responding at House of Lords question time to the Countess of Mar, who warned that children's immune systems and central nervous systems were not fully developed and "small doses" apparently affect them very much more than they do an adult, on whom these doses are tested.

Lord Donoughue replied: "We are aware of that. And at this moment the regulations in relation to children are in fact being reviewed."

For the Tories, Lord Swinford asked: "Even if the residues in individual foods are at a safe level, is there evidence that there is a build-up of some residues in the human body that ultimately could be dangerous?"

Lord Donoughue told him: "I don't know the answer to that."

We have a number of studies under way, one in particular in Edinburgh from which we expect results next year."

The minister said tests had shown less than 1 per cent of produce showed signs of residues "at a level which we would consider of concern".

Lord Donoughue added: "There have been cases, especially in relation to carrots, say, and apples - especially back in the 1995-96 testing - where there was a jump in the danger levels and we have taken action there to restrict the application and use. We did ban one pesticide."

Baroness Tringham, 75, a former Tory agriculture minister, commented: "At my age, I am probably absolutely stuffed full of residues."

"Scaremongering can cause great damage to growers of apples, for instance, who are very hard pressed at the present time."

Lord Donoughue replied: "If you are the product of the residues in you, they can only be a very good thing!"

Turkey tops list for holiday food bugs

ANYONE LOOKING to avoid "Delhi-belly" on holiday this year should stay well clear of Turkey, as tourists are more likely to suffer upset stomachs there than at any other popular holiday destination, according to research published yesterday.

The study was conducted by Commercial Union, which analysed last year's travel insurance claims to pin-point disaster hotspots abroad. In Turkey, 1,200 people claimed for "gastric problems".

Spain remains the most popular destination for British holidaymakers and it is expected that seven million will fly out there this year. Insurers receive more overall claims from Spain

than anywhere else. Proportionally, tourists travelling to Spain are more likely have their flight delayed, lose their luggage or be pickpocketed.

France had the least number of claims in all categories, despite being the second most popular holiday destination for British tourists.

Ian Frater, a spokesman for Commercial Union, said: "It is estimated that 29 million holidaymakers will be taken this year ... (but) 2.9 million people will still jet off without any kind of insurance protection. We decided to map out the problem areas for holidaymakers to encourage them to take their travel insurance more seriously."

IN BRIEF

Four remanded over London bomb plot

Four people were remanded in custody by magistrates in London yesterday in connection with last Friday's alleged bomb plot in London. Anthony Hyland, 25; Darren Mulholland, 19, of Dundalk, Co Louth; Elaine Moore, 21, of Hampstead, north-west London and Liam Grogan, 21, of Naas, Co Kildare, are charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. Mr Mulholland, Ms Moore and Ms Grogan are also charged with possession of explosive substances.

Premiership kick-off for Ulster

Eamonn Holmes, the GMTV presenter, is hoping to start a Premiership-quality football team in Northern Ireland. He told Talk Radio that he had spoken to Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and that the Government was "quite active" in the matter. "Wherever you are in the world you have heard of Sheffield and Oldham, but mention Belfast and all people think of is trouble," he said.

Art market jobs under threat

Five thousand jobs in London's internationally-important art market are at risk under European proposals to introduce resale rights for artists when their work is sold, and it would cost the economy about £8m a year, Ian McCartney, a Trade and Industry minister, said.

£1m rejected for Moore trophies

The former wife of Bobby Moore has rejected a £1 million offer to keep his football trophies in Britain, including his 1966 World Cup winner's medal, the Football Museum said yesterday. Tina Moore says she wants £2 million, for her children's future. The football star died of cancer five years ago.

Ryder squashes Black Grape

THE POP band, Black Grape, have called it a day, the group's front man, Shaun Ryder, has announced. The singer said he would carry on making records but told the music paper, *Melody Maker*, there will be no more records under group name and no live shows.

Churchill still saleroom favourite

ITEMS ONCE belonging to Sir Winston Churchill proved to be the highlights at an auction of political memorabilia at Sotheby's yesterday - with two paintings by the wartime leader fetching £75,000 and £40,000.

Mr Simon Huddart

IN AN article headlined "Surgeon cancelled boy's operation over pay row" (13 March) we wrongly stated that a surgeon, Simon Huddart of University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, had cancelled a hernia operation on a young child claiming he was not paid enough by the NHS, and that he had told the child's mother that he would perform the operation straight away if she paid privately. In fact it was the hospital authorities who took the decision to cancel the operation, and Mr Huddart, who had operated throughout the day, did not offer to carry it out privately. The hospital investigation into the incident totally exonerated Mr Huddart from these charges. We apologise to Mr Huddart for the distress and embarrassment caused.

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Unsolved mystery of bin-bag baby

BY JONATHAN FOSTER

THE ANONYMOUS corpse of a baby boy will be buried this month, 136 days after his still unsolved homicide ended a life which had lasted only hours.

On a cold, dry night in March, someone took a clean black plastic bin-bag, placed the strangled 7lb 8oz new-born body inside, and crept into a copse. The package was abandoned alongside a footpath, a secretive act bound to be discovered. The body was found at 11 o'clock the following morning.



Police at the spot where the body was found. Phil Noble

The subsequent homicide investigation by Cheshire police has been comprehensive - and inconclusive. Every recent local pregnancy notified to doctors has been investigated. Samples of DNA were taken from more than 300 teenage girls. Witnesses have been sought, people seen in the vicinity traced, and psychological profiles drawn. But nothing has led the 25 detectives involved in the inquiry to the baby's mother.

"This was a little baby boy whom we know from the post-mortem examination could have had a full and normal life," said Detective Chief Inspector John Hester, who is in charge of the investigation. "We know it was an amateur delivery, we also know he could have lived, and we know he was strangled. Even after this time, I still have concern for the

mother's well-being. She must have been in considerable mental distress and very probably in physical distress. Unsupervised births are especially traumatic and often lead to complications.

"To have killed the baby is still more traumatic.

"We have a DNA profile from the body, which means the mother can be identified, but only an indication given of the father's identity."

Police data banks strengthened some of Det Ch Insp Hester's hunches. The killing of new-born babies is rare, but facts found in previous cases suggest that the child was born locally, in the Warrington area. With a probably unwitting

touch of irony, the bin-bag containing the baby's body was left close to the approach road to Gulliver's World, a castellated building standing alone in parkland. It is an elaborate children's adventure playground, with special rides for infants.

There is a community locally, but it is fragmented, a New Town of ersatz half-timbered houses in isolated cul-de-sacs, close to shopping malls. It was from one of these arcades that Asda, the supermarket, organised a collection to pay for the funeral of the child who was posthumously christened "Baby Callum".

Local people doubt if Callum was murdered, and Det Ch Insp Hester is cautious about at-

tributing intent. The profile that detectives think most probably fits the mother - if not the killer - starts with a concealed pregnancy.

"That was what happened in a similar case a few years ago," Det Ch Insp Hester said. "A 13-year-old girl got pregnant and went full term at home with neither parent knowing. She carried on going to school and gave birth in secret. Then she killed the baby."

Det Ch Insp Hester thinks that the facts of that case may bear similarities to the killing of Baby Callum and the area of Warrington in which he died, which was why DNA tests were run on girls absent from school around the time of the killing. Only one family refused to allow their daughter to be tested, and she was eliminated from the investigation after interview.

"By taking a scrape from inside the mouth with a small device like a toothbrush you avoid seeing them where they were and who they had been with," the Detective Chief Inspector said. "This is such a tragedy, particularly for the mother," he added. "What's driven her to it?"

Callum's funeral will take place on 27 July. The collection by Asda raised more than £1,500 and the supermarket has donated an equal sum for the burial of the tiny body found next to a children's playground.

Police take too much sick leave, say MPs

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

SCOTLAND YARD came under fire from MPs yesterday as a Commons committee revealed that London police officers were taking an average of three working weeks off sick a year.

The total cost of the Metropolitan Police's sickness bill was a staggering £96m. The 397,000 working days lost through sickness in the year 1996-97 represented a 25 per cent increase since 1991-92.



Sir Paul Condon: urged to reduce police sick leave

David Davis MP, Tory chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, warned Sir Paul Condon, the Met Commissioner, that he must do more to use sanctions against officers who took time off unnecessarily.

He said: "The cost of sickness absence is unacceptably high and the very high levels of absence in some areas must have an impact on the prevention and detection of crime. There are sanctions available to tackle abuse of sick leave and we expect them to be used."

Sir Paul has already warned his 26,700 officers that regulations are being introduced to check their sickness claims and any suspicion of malingering could cost them their chances of promotion.

Undercover teams have been assigned to check on officers who are suspected of falsely claiming to be ill. One constable was accused of operating a carpet-cleaning business while claiming to be off sick with a bad back.

The Met has set itself the target of making savings of nearly £10m during 1998-99 by reducing absence levels due to sickness.

A report issued yesterday by the committee stated that much of the increase in officer sickness was due to long-term sickness which accounts for 103,000 lost working days, almost double the figure for six years ago. In the same period, medical retirement has doubled.

In the three years to March 1997, 67 of the 1,345 members of the Met police who took ill-health retirement did so while facing disciplinary investigation.

The report found that uniformed constables, who took an average of 16 days sick a year, were more prone to illness and physical assault than detectives, who took an average of 11 days off.

But the most vulnerable group was police traffic wardens, who averaged more than 20 working days off a year, more than nine days more than the rest of the civilian staff.

The MPs noted: "The [Met] needs to reduce the number of assaults on traffic wardens, currently running at between 50 and 60 a year."

Body's pain relief mimics cannabis

BY CHARLES ARTHUR
Technology Editor

THE ABILITY of cannabis to control the pain of people suffering from illnesses such as multiple sclerosis and arthritis may arise because the body makes similar chemicals to control pain signals.

Scientists have discovered that cannabis-like substances that the body produces are key in the control of pain experienced beyond the central nervous system.

That would tally with the preference of people who are smoking cannabis to control symptoms from various illnesses. In California, a recent by-law allowed people to grow cannabis for medicinal purposes.

According to work published today in the science journal *Nature*, "cannabinoid receptors" located outside the brain and spine are affected when the skin or flesh is cut or hurt. A cannabis-like chemical produced by the body, called anandamide, is released when cells are damaged and helps to ease the pain sensation.

Working together with another cannabinoid called PEA that the body makes, they re-

duced pain 100-fold, scientists found.

Antonio Calignano, at the University of Naples in Italy, found that rats which were treated with a chemical that blocked the action of anandamide showed longer and greater reaction to pain.

The findings could be important for research now underway in Britain, where the Home Office last month issued the first-ever licence to grow cannabis for investigation into the development of medicines.

Dr Geoffrey Guy, who is running the tests, aims to extract active chemicals from the plants and check their effectiveness as painkillers. "I'm interested in producing something helpful to certain people, such as multiple sclerosis sufferers, people with painful spinal injuries and pain from nerve diseases," he said last month.

The Italian researchers also noted that their findings could lead to new anaesthetics which will exploit the ability of anandamide and similar cannabinoids generated by the body to "reduce pain without... side effects and perceived abuse potential" of cannabis or opiates such as heroin.

Judge to sample 'holiday hell'

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

A JUDGE has adjourned a court hearing about a "holiday from hell" so that he can visit the hotel concerned - in Malta.

It is the first time that a case of this nature has been halted for a foreign visit.

Judge Anthony Cleary, presiding at Birmingham County Court, will travel to the Palm Court Hotel, St Paul's Bay, today with the solicitors for each side and return on Friday.

Ros Fernihough, representing the plaintiffs, said foreign trips were usually only made when millions of pounds were at stake.

Since this case is in the small-claims court, the plaintiffs will receive a maximum of £3,000.

"It is completely unprecedented under the package travel regulations that a court has been adjourned to travel to foreign parts," she said.

"Normally the judge would look at photos and video evidence and decide the case, but in this case he felt unable to do that and when the defendants, Malta Sun Holidays Ltd, invited him to visit the hotel, he agreed."

Ms Fernihough, who is paying for the cost of the visit out of her own purse, said there had been numerous complaints about the two-star hotel but none of them was out of the ordinary.

"It's what I call the usual grotty hotel case," she said. "The families complained of cockroaches, dirty rooms, tatty and broken furniture, poor plumbing and a smell of sewerage."

"They have video evidence and photographs but the defendants were so adamant that the hotel was fine and produced evidence to the contrary that it was impossible for the judge to decide the case."

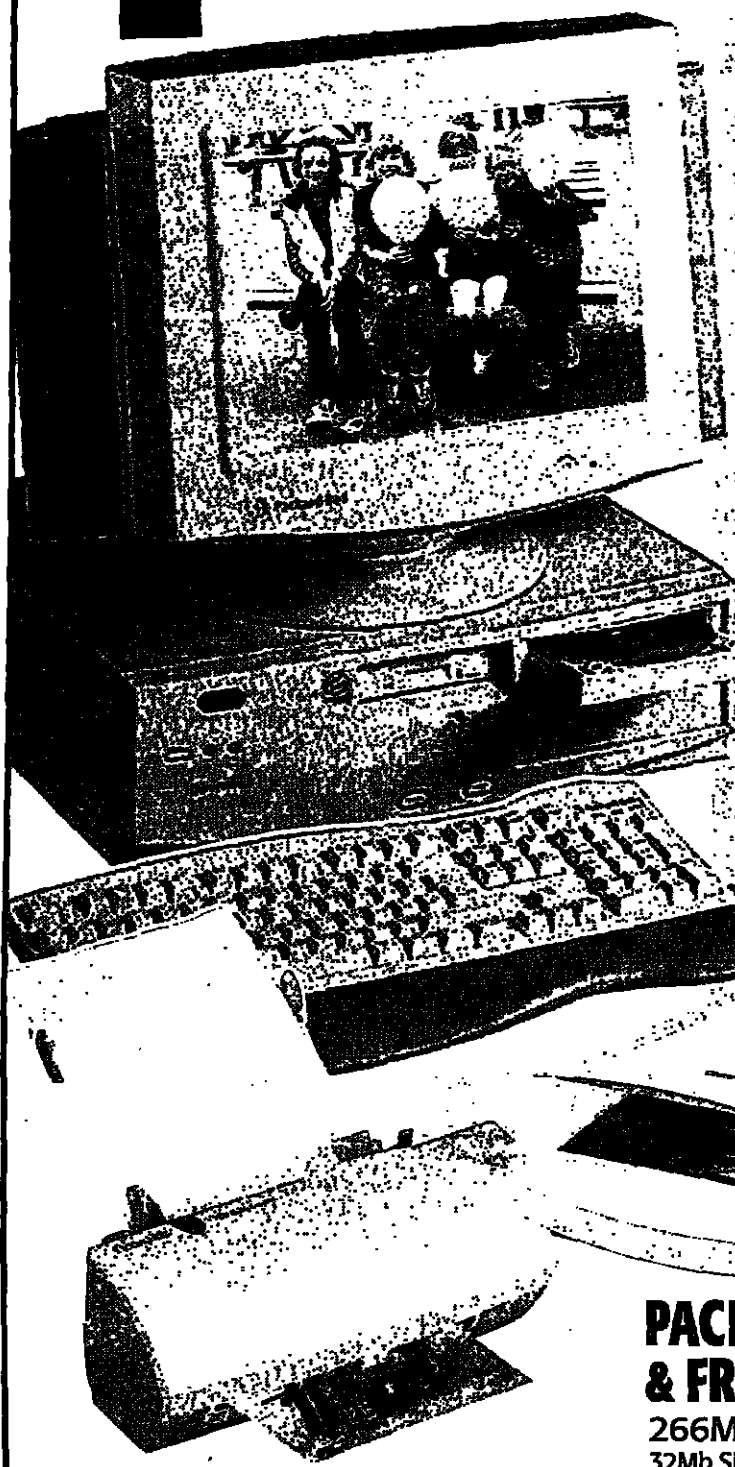
"But when they invited him to go to Malta and have a look we never thought he would even consider it."

But consider it he did, and Judge Cleary, Ms Fernihough and Tom Brown, representing the travel company, will depart from Birmingham airport for a 24-hour visit today.

However, Ms Fernihough said she would not be staying in the Palm Court Hotel.

"Certainly not. I don't know about the others but I have made my own arrangements," she said.

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PC WORLD
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The M9 galaxy: but how many more stars remain undetected?

Royal Observatory Edinburgh/Anglo-Australian Observatory

Heat reveals earliest stars

By CHARLES ARTHUR
Technology Editor

ASTRONOMERS ARE on the brink of a "true revolution" in their understanding of how many stars there are in the universe. The experts have realised that even the Hubble optical space telescope is unable to see a huge number of stars that have been burning brightly for billions of years.

The new findings have been described as "tremendously exciting" and a "true revolution" by Ian Robson of the UK's Joint Astronomy Centre, because they could force a revision of many ideas about when the majority of stars in our universe were formed. Before, astronomers had reckoned that many visible stars formed when the universe was about seven or eight billion years old, about half its present age.

But the new data would imply that many stars and galaxies formed when the universe was about one-eighth of its present age - perhaps just

two billion years old. "Understanding this new [star] population is essential in order to get a comprehensive picture of cosmic galaxy formation," said Richard Ellis, director of the Institute of Astronomy at Cambridge University.

The realisation that stars often form in thick dust clouds, which themselves absorb visible light, led two teams of British scientists and of American and Japanese astronomers, to wonder whether there might be a way of detecting any radiation put out by the dust clouds. Their work is reported today in the journal *Nature*.

Though the dust absorbs visible light, it radiates it again as heat, or infra-red light that is "stretched" by the expanding universe, and so even harder to detect with optical instruments. But, by using the radio telescope Scuba, the Japanese and American team found that apparently dark patches of space were glowing with energy from galaxies formed when the universe was very young.

Hoover loses out over free flights

By ANDREW BUNCOMBE

THE SAGA of the Hoover free flights offer took a new twist yesterday when three customers who missed out on flights to America were awarded compensation against the electrical company.

Three men were each awarded more than £350 after District Judge Ivor Bennett ruled that Hoover had been in breach of its contract.

The ruling, which relates to a promotion dating from 1993 and 1994, follows a decision by the same judge on Tuesday dismissing the claims of four other people. The judge ruled that those customers had turned down free flights offered to them as alternatives to their first choices.

Last night Harry Cichy, of the Hoover Holiday Pressure Group, based in Hemel Hempstead, Herts, said he was delighted by the rulings.

"After yesterday's results we were a bit downhearted," he said. "We will now sit back and take stock of everything that has happened, but we feel we have been vindicated and plan to fight on."

Yesterday at St Helens County Court, Merseyside, Judge Bennett dismissed Hoover's argument that the three claimants - David Albutt from Essex, Malcolm Hill from Essex and Peter Madigan from Ayrshire - had not followed the competition's rules.

The electrical giant said the men had not submitted second choice dates for flights, should their first choice not be available. Judge Bennett decided

this was not the case and awarded Mr Albutt £398 and £374 for the other two men. They were also awarded some of their costs.

The judge yesterday rejected the claim of claimant Bernard Cramp, from Sussex, because he had failed to take up alternative offers.

Hoover said more than 220,000 customers flew to America as part of the promotion which offered free flights if they spent more than £100 on a Hoover product. Thousands of people bought items purely for the prospect of a free trip.

The promotion back-fired on Hoover, and the company had to spend £20m on flights to satisfy demand. Several executives were sacked.

Thousands of customers claimed they did not receive the free tickets. More than 100 cases are still outstanding at St Helens County Court.

Last night Hoover said it would probably be appealing against the three decisions which went against them.

"Whilst Hoover is pleased with the judgements, in its favour in five cases heard yesterday and today, it is likely that we will be appealing the three judgements made against us," said a spokeswoman.

"Where the judgement was made in favour of Hoover it clearly vindicates the stance the company has adopted. Facts of these cases are common to other examples of free flights' litigation."

Judge Bennett has declined to award damages for general upset, distress or inconvenience.

Al Fayed 'moved goalposts' on deal

By STEPHEN HOWARD

MOHAMED AL Fayed refused to pay top broadcasting consultant Michael Hollingsworth £127,000 in fees after the Harrods owner lost interest in setting up a media empire, a High Court judge was told yesterday.

Mr Hollingsworth, husband of TV personality Anne Diamond, was brought in to run Mr Fayed's company, Liberty Broadcasting, after it bought the AM London radio station, Viva.

Philip Shepherd, representing Mr Hollingsworth, told Mr Justice David Steel that Mr Fayed had plans to expand in broadcasting and publishing but Viva had reception problems and his revamped *Punch* magazine failed to take off.

Mr Hollingsworth, who runs Venture Television representing a stable of presenters, accepted a job as consultant with Mr Fayed at an annual salary of

£170,000 with six months' notice.

But when the media projects were unsuccessful commercially, Mr Fayed's company "moved the goalposts" in its agreement with Mr Hollingsworth, said Mr Shepherd. He claimed that Mr Hollingsworth was not paid for several months and Liberty refused to pay him six months' money in lieu of notice.

Mr Shepherd said that Mr Hollingsworth knew when he negotiated his contract that it was "very easy to be flavour of the month one week and not the next".

"That was particularly so in this case because Mr Hollingsworth appreciated that this was something of a new venture for Mr Fayed and that to put it frankly, Mr Fayed was known for being keen on things at one moment and then to completely lose interest the next."



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Cynthia Fowler

Air Commodore Cynthia Fowler ADC RAF

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Payback time as Blair makes capital out of spending spree

A WEEK is a long time in politics and the contrast between Prime Minister's question time yesterday and the previous week could not have been more marked.

After the pummeling given to Tony Blair by William Hague last Wednesday, the Prime Minister regained the initiative. Buoyed by the afterglow of Gordon Brown's old-fashioned spending spree, Mr Blair was determined to cash in on the moment, get in on the act and obtain his share of the limelight.

He had watched, silently, as Mr Brown and his acolytes stole the show the day before when oodles of doodle were sprayed all over schools and hospitals. He saw at

first hand how skin deep the New Labour philosophy of fiscal rectitude and monetary restraint really is when a taste of the old-fashioned medicine is tipped down grateful backbenchers.

The Labour Party was still in party mode and the hangover from the night before will be delayed many months. So it was a brazen and confident Prime Minister who was waiting with his playground mob of boisterous backbenchers to pay back the Just William gang who had thrown mud and other "Cronygate" missiles at him earlier.

Mr Hague was in a stew about the welfare budget which he said was going up by £27bn over the next

three years, contrary to Mr Blair's promises at the last election.

The Prime Minister retorted that most of the increases were for child benefit, disability and pensions. The New Deal, he said, would reduce the remainder of the welfare budget as young people came off the dole and got real jobs.

Mr Blair was determined not to be mugged at the despatch box and managed a couple of hard left hooks which bruised young William but did no serious damage. When argument failed to convince either of the other's case they both resorted to insults. "He can dance around that despatch box with sixth-form debating points but he

THE SKETCH



MICHAEL BROWN

doesn't have a clue," the Prime Minister ranted at Mr Hague.

The opposition leader returned the fire with his own catapult - "£14bn increase in the Depart-

ment of Social Security budget is hidden away as accounting adjustments; the Paymaster General [Geoffrey Robinson] would probably put this down as directors' fees". This got a good cheer from the Tories but they have been on the back foot these past couple of days.

Referring to the Tories' new "listen to the people" exercise, the Prime Minister said, to Labour laughter: "You're on a listening tour, so listen".

Dennis Skinner (Lab, Bolton) shouted from a seated position that it was time for Just William to go back to bed and so Paddy Ashdown, for the Liberal Democrats, tried to move things on without

much more success. Mr Ashdown asked, to laughter from all sides, "What happens if the unexpected happens?"

Mr Blair claimed to be prepared for all eventualities. If he is, this will be a first for any government or prime minister. Margaret Thatcher and Harold Macmillan both acknowledged the capacity of events and the unexpected to overwhelm the best laid plans.

Mr Blair played his dirtiest trick on the hapless Michael Fabricant (C, Lichfield) who followed a long line of Tory backbenchers pursuing Mr Hague's theme. Inspired by an infant's school visit earlier in the day, the Prime Minister treated Mr

Fabricant like a three year old. Swinging himself to stage right and using his arms for emphasis Mr Blair said: "There is a part of the budget on pensions, child benefit and disability. Good. We like that spending."

Turning himself through 180 degrees, Mr Blair went on: "Now we've got this part that is about unemployed people on benefit when they should be at work. Bad."

Stage right again: "This bit we protect."

Stage left again: "But we use the New Deal to diminish this bit. Got it?"

Simplicity is always the best way and even I finally understood.

Hague targets social security pledges

THE PRIME MINISTER strongly denied that his government was failing to control social security spending yesterday and accused the Conservatives of wanting to cut budgets of "front-line" services.

Following the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review on Tuesday, the leader of the Opposition, William Hague, charged Mr Blair with failing to live up to his pre-election pledge to cut welfare spending - set to rise by £27bn over the next three years, according to Commons library figures obtained by the Conservatives.

During Prime Minister's Questions Mr Blair repeatedly challenged Mr Hague to say, on the record, which social service he would cut? He said that the Tories would go into the next election having opposed extra cash for health and education. "That's their choice and they

WELFARE
BY DAISY SAMPSON

will have to live with it," he said. Phil Woolas (Lab, Oldham E and Saddleworth), a former president of the National Union of Students, said his constituents wanted the extra money "translated into real hospital beds and real classrooms as soon as possible".

Mr Blair told him: "That's precisely what will happen... By tying it to reform and modernisation we will ensure that money is spent well, spent wisely, goes to the front line of services."

"The Conservative Party, having decided to oppose our plans now... will be going into the next general election saying that what we're doing for the schools and hospitals in providing more - they would be providing less."

Mr Hague said: "Having vowed to cut welfare bills, you have comprehensively failed to do so. Can you confirm that the social security budget will now rise by over £27bn over the next three years? And can you explain why the Chancellor didn't even mention this yesterday?"

Mr Blair said the £27bn was money spent on the whole of the social security budget. "The vast bulk is spent on pensions, child benefit and disabilities - and through the new deal we are cutting spending on social and economic failure as we promised. Perhaps you'll tell us which of those items - pensions, child benefit or disabilities - you would like to cut?"

Mr Hague said: "It's you who said new Labour is about cutting welfare bills. It's no good two years later asking other people how to do it -

What's now happening is an increase in the rate of growth of welfare spending - £5bn extra next year, £2bn the year after, £14bn the year after."

"Will you now admit that you've failed and far and away the biggest increase in yesterday's announcement - bigger than education and health - was in welfare and social security spending?"

But Mr Blair would not be drawn, telling MPs: "That's our policy opposed by you. So not merely do you oppose us raising pensions, child benefit and disabilities, but you also oppose the measures that do cut the bills of economic and social failure."

But again the Tory leader accused him of disingenuous accounting. However, Mr Blair had the last backbench laugh, telling his opponent: "You're on a listening tour, so listen."



Tony Blair and David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, applauding pupils' singing at the Hawley Infant and Nursery School, north London, on the day the Government accelerated its pledge on class sizes John Voos

Ulster killings condemned

THE PRIME MINISTER yesterday condemned the "appalling and evil tragedy" of the murder of the three young Quinn brothers in Ballymoney on the day that the Northern Ireland Bill was introduced into the Commons.

The Bill gives legal form to the peace Agreement that was negotiated on Good Friday and should go through all its Commons stages before the Summer.

He was responding at question time to Kate Hoey (Lab, Vauxhall) who condemned the sectarian firebomb attack.

Obviously deeply upset by the tragedy, Ms Hoey, who is Ul-

NORTHERN IRELAND
BY DAISY SAMPSON

ster-born congratulated the way that the RUC had shown "they can be even-handed" and added: "Those who call for their disbandment are just plain wrong."

Mr Blair agreed with her saying: "I think that the RUC, in showing that they are prepared to stand for the rule of law in respect of intimidation from any quarter did a great service both to themselves and to the peace process in Northern Ireland."

Later in Prime Minister's Questions, Eddy McGrady

(SDLP Down South) asked Mr Blair to agree "that the right of a limited number of people to march in a limited stretch of road must be subjugated against the odds for death, terrorism, sectarianism, intimidation, road blocking, business destruction is the alternative we are now seeing".

Mr Blair said that "with a bit of goodwill and dialogue we can find a way round" the problems posed by the marching season.

He praised the recent behaviour of the nationalist SDLP and of Ulster Unionist Leader and First Minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly, David

Trimble who, he said, had with his SDLP deputy, Seamus Mallon, "shown what the future of Northern Ireland could be if people wanted it".

Eddy McGrady urged the Orangemen not to march down the Garvaghy Road saying it would not be a defeat for them but a "massive contribution to the welfare of the people of Northern Ireland".

Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, agreed that incredible progress had been made and acknowledged it had taken "a lot of guts of both" Mr Trimble and Mr Mallon to move forward to advance the peace process.

Fare rise to pay for better Tube

FARES ON THE London Underground may have to be raised substantially and train services cut back, an influential Commons committee warned yesterday. Such drastic measures would be necessary, it said, to pay for the Government's ambitious modernisation plans.

Ministers propose a "public private partnership" with Tube trains, track and stations leased to private firms, which would then rent them back to London Transport. Money collected by private firms would be used to upgrade the ailing network.

However, the Transport Select Committee said yesterday it was "seriously concerned that - in the event of a gap between income from fares and the payments to contractors - there would be 'pressure to raise fares and reduce service levels'".

Campaigners said Londoners were already seeing "huge" rises. Ticket prices have risen by more than 40 per cent in real terms since 1985. "The most heavily used lines have seen some of the biggest rises. About a third of all journeys are made in the central area of Zone 1 -

TRANSPORT
BY RANDEEP RAMESH
Transport Correspondent

which last year saw fares rise by 8.3 per cent when inflation... was 3.3 per cent," said Cynthia Hay, co-ordinator for Capital Transport Campaign.

Experts said that as the private sector expected "a higher rate of return than borrowing from the Treasury", fares were likely to go up. "The Government wants £7bn to be invested over 15 years... about £500m a year extra. If it all came from ticket sales, it would see fares rise by 50 per cent," said Maurice Fitzpatrick, of accountants Chantrey Vellacott.

Gwyneth Dunwoody, the transport committee chair, said

government must "cap fare increases and set minimum service levels". MPs also called plans to lease Tube trains, track and stations to the private sector as a "convoluted compromise".

The report said Peter Ford, the former London Transport chairman, had estimated the plans would add £1bn to the cost of renewing the system.

The committee also called for the Government to release a report by accountants Price Waterhouse outlining the cost of alternatives such as floating the Tube on the stock market.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Performers' right

JOHN DENHAM, a Social Security minister, said that performers, who have hitherto been treated as self-employed by the Inland Revenue and as employees for National Insurance purposes, will now be regarded as self-employed. He said performers who have incorrectly been paying NI contributions over the past six months can apply for a refund.

Prison escorts
Lord Williams of Mostyn, a Home Office minister, said that only people subject to security arrangements are eligible for police escorts, or prisoners where such escorts are considered necessary.

MPs 'should pay through the nose' for car parking

MPs WHO receive free year-round parking passes in the House of Commons should be made to pay for the privilege. John Prescott has been told.

Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, wrote to Mr Prescott saying Commons' parking passes represent a £1.56m annual motorists' subsidy. If MPs were made to park in the car park across the road from the Houses of Parliament they would pay £19.50 for 12 hours' stay. With Parliament sitting for about 200 out of every 365 days it would cost them £3,900 a year.

Mr Baker said the Government should encourage motorists to leave their cars at home by making them pay. He asked his researcher to find out how many people drove

through the nose for it like those who use the public car park opposite have to," he said.

Although all MPs are asked when they arrive if they want a car parking pass, Mr Baker has declined his. He uses the train to travel between his south-coast constituency and the house.

A spokesman for the Sergeant at Arms office, which allocates the passes, said it was starting to collect data on how many MPs used their car parking passes regularly.

"We have a sense that members are using their cars less. They just don't apply for the pass or they have one and they don't use it," he said.

A spokeswoman for Mr Prescott's department said he had not yet seen the letter.

THE HOUSE



Sorry speech

NICHOLAS SOAMES, the former Tory armed-forces minister, apologised to Labour for an "appalling" speech by his backbench colleague, Julian Lewis, for accusing the QC Baroness Kennedy, the Labour life peer, of being an ex-Communist supporter.

Mr Lewis, MP for New Forest East, called on the new British Council chairman, Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws, to "disavow the disgraceful political record she had of support for Communist organisations who supported regimes whose murderous activities left a blot on the history of the 20th century". Foreign Office Minister of State Doug Henderson said: "I think the House will appreciate the comments of Mr Soames, who set the record straight on the content of the speech..."

Rents to leap

COUNCIL HOUSE rents are to rise by 5 per cent above inflation over the next three years. The announcement - in the Lords on the day Chancellor Gordon Brown unveiled his Comprehensive Spending Review - was condemned by the Tories as "a new tax on hard-working men and women across the UK".

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Greenpeace urges UN to save St Kilda

THE ANNUAL battle of the Atlantic between Greenpeace and the oil industry began yesterday. Eco-activists in a tiny catamaran forced an exploration vessel off course and in a separate move the campaigners appealed to the United Nations to intervene to save the tiny islands of St Kilda from oil hazards.

Launched from the MV Greenpeace, which is trying to disrupt the search for oil in the "Atlantic Frontier", the catamaran with four protesters on board sailed into the path of a seismic testing vessel. The incident took place about 100 miles west of Scotland in a block licensed to Conoco. Robbie Kelman, a campaigner on board Greenpeace, said the Atlantic Explorer was forced to change course at the last moment.

Simultaneously, the environmentalists were also claiming a threat to St Kilda, the most isolated of the British Isles, far west of the Outer Hebrides and abandoned by its last permanent residents 60 years ago.

St Kilda has the world's largest population of the gannet and the UK's largest population

By STEPHEN GOODWIN
Scotland Correspondent

of fulmars. The clear waters around its rocky shores are rich in marine life including whales and dolphins. So important ecologically is St Kilda that it is Britain's only natural World Heritage Site - the highest United Nations designation.

Greenpeace says that this natural richness is threatened by oil exploration in the Atlantic Frontier and has appealed to the UN's scientific and cultural arm, Unesco, to put St Kilda on its "in-danger" list.

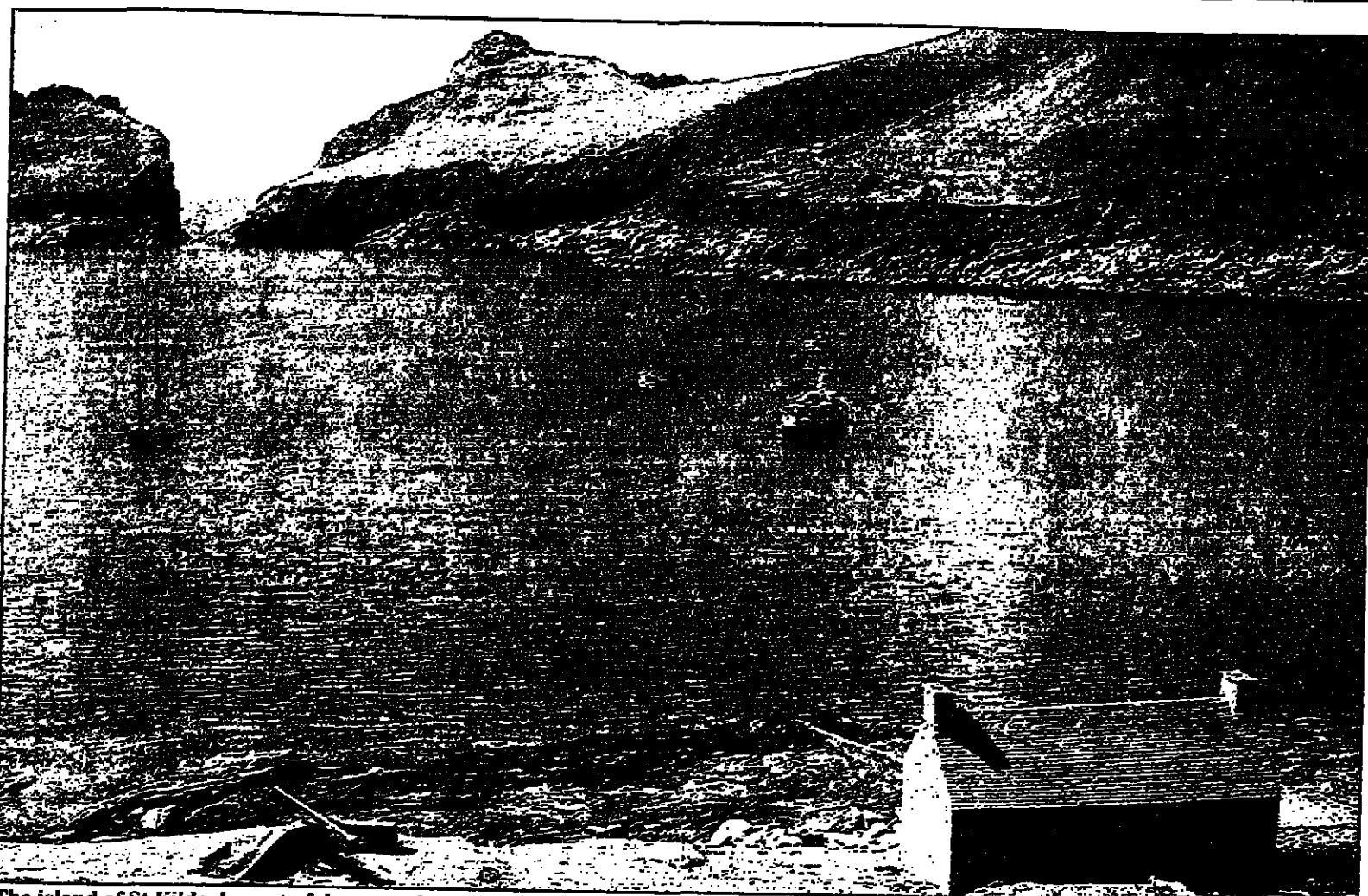
"St Kilda is part of our universal heritage, it belongs to everyone in the world," said Lord Melchett, Greenpeace's executive director. "It is a unique and terribly fragile in the face of oil. Since the British government care so little for it, we are asking the United Nations to save it."

If the cluster of four islands was listed as in danger, it would put powerful moral pressure on ministers not to take any risks in the granting of further exploration licences.

The industry denies that

there is any risk to St Kilda from its activities and sees the appeal to the UN as a Greenpeace stunt. "Greenpeace exists to campaign and Greenpeace will campaign. This is life," was the philosophical response of a BP spokesman.

The threat to St Kilda is difficult to judge. Though the Department of Trade and Industry has offered 22,000 square miles of Atlantic seabed for exploration, the map shows clear blue water for at least 100 miles around the islands with no company operating at all. The nearest serious activity is some 200 miles away in the Foinaven field, operated by BP and Shell.



The island of St Kilda, home to fulmars and gannets - and threatened, Greenpeace says, by the activities of oil companies David Lomax

Childminder 'did not shake baby'

By NATALIE MARTIN

A CHILDMINDER yesterday denied she had done anything to cause the serious head injuries which killed a five-month-old boy who was in her care.

Giving evidence on the third day of her trial at Norwich Crown Court, Helen Stacey, 41, of North Walsham, Norfolk, said she had never shaken the child. She denies murdering Joseph Mackin - the son of Anthony and Corinne Mackin, also of North Walsham - at her home on 13 May 1997.

Asked by Graham Parkins QC, for the defence, if she had shaken him on 13 May or at any other time, Ms Stacey replied: "No."

Mr Parkins asked: "Did you throw him down in a cot, on a mattress or a sofa?"

Ms Stacey replied: "No."

Mr Parkins then asked her if she had done anything to cause injuries to the boy and she replied: "None whatsoever."

Ms Stacey said there had been no accident involving Joseph when he was in her care and no other adult had been with the baby in her absence.

She went on to explain that she had decided to become a childminder following the birth of her daughter, Monique, in August 1996.

"My husband had taken another job which did not pay so much. We needed the money

but I did not want to leave my daughter with anyone else. I wanted to be with her all the time so I decided to find something to do at home so I could be with her."

She said she had known one or two other childminders and had enjoyed looking after children. She said she had found out about childminding after Monique was born and was cleared to be registered at about Christmas-time 1996.

Before Joseph and his two-year-old sister Samantha went to her in May 1997, she had looked after another two-year-old with no complaints, the court was told.

Joseph died four days after Ms Stacey started to care for him when Mrs Mackin, 36, returned to work part time. The jury has been told he suffered a severe head injury inflicted by the use of considerable force.

The prosecution alleges that Ms Stacey shook the baby after losing her temper and then failed to call a doctor.

Joseph was taken to hospital when his father Anthony arrived to collect him but died from his injuries. Mr Mackin has told the court he left Joseph and Samantha "perfectly well" and smiling. But when he went back to collect them it was obvious something was seriously wrong with the baby, who was grey and floppy.

The case continues.

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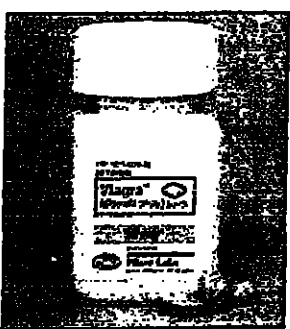
DESPATCHES FROM THE FRONTIERS
OF MEDICINE

WHAT IS England known for? Along with rain, roast beef and adulterous monarchs we can now include a small, blue, diamond-shaped pill designed to help men put the snap back in their celery. Viagra, it turns out, is a British invention, according to three patents filed by its manufacturer, Pfizer, whose laboratories are based in Sandwich, Kent.

The first, filed in June 1991, was for a new class of compounds, pyrazolopyrimidines, to treat heart trouble. Its inventors are listed as Andrew Bell, Dr David Brown and Dr Nicholas Terrett. While these drugs were on initial trials for safety in healthy volunteers, its pleasing side effect was noticed. Volunteers began asking for extra supplies to take home.

In May 1994, a second patent was filed for the same class of drugs but this time for impotence. The inventors were Dr Nicholas Terrett, again, and Peter Ellis.

A third patent, filed in June last year, discloses a process for preparing sildenafil, the chemical name for Viagra. The inventors this time were



Peter Dunn and Albert Wood.

The inventors are unlikely to benefit directly - financially, that is - but Pfizer is expected to make millions. Viagra is already one of the fastest selling drugs in the US and is expected to be licensed in Britain in the autumn.

But yesterday the British Association of Urological Surgeons warned hospital clinics would be overwhelmed if Viagra was made available only via consultants. Alan Milburn, the health minister, earlier warned: "I am determined to ensure NHS resources aren't frittered away on 'recreational' prescribing of Viagra."

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Ten harpists from the BBC Symphony Orchestra rehearsing for the First Night of the Proms, held tomorrow. The orchestra, under conductor Andrew Davis, will launch the 104th season of the BBC Proms with a performance of Berlioz' 'The Damnation of Faust' Andrew Buurman

Fury at arrest of homeless centre staff

TWO MANAGERS of a day centre for the homeless are expected to be charged today with allowing their premises to be used for the supply of drugs.

Homeless charities said it was the first time such workers had been arrested by police and predicted it would place managers of hostels and homeless centres in an impossible position.

The two were arrested after a two-month undercover operation by Cambridgeshire police in which officers disguised themselves as homeless people and secretly filmed inside the centre.

Ruth Wyner, 48, director of the Winter Comfort homeless project in Cambridge, said she was "shocked and very confused" to be arrested. She said she had been working with the homeless for 20 years and had not been arrested for any offence before.

Mrs Wyner, who has two children, said: "It's a known fact that around half of people who are homeless are injecting drugs. We try to stop people bringing drugs on to the premises but we don't have powers to search people."

She claimed the centre had a "stringent policy" on drugs

and anyone found using or supplying illegal drugs was barred.

Also arrested and on police bail is John Brock, 48, a former college lecturer, who has been project manager at the Overstream House day centre for seven years. He said he was "devastated" by the police's handling of the matter and "very anxious" for his family.

The police operation, code-named Wythall, was aimed at tackling the problem of heroin use in Cambridge. After the undercover filming, officers raided six addresses in the city in May and arrested four men and two women. They were charged with supplying heroin.

Five days later Mrs Wyner was arrested and taken in for questioning before being released on police bail. Mr Brock was arrested the following week.

Yesterday Kate Head, of the National Homeless Alliance, said that Winter Comfort was one of 1,000 similar projects around Britain and the system would be thrown into "chaos" by the police action.

She also accused Cambridgeshire police of contradicting government policy on social exclusion, which stresses that the police should work in co-operation with homeless agencies in fighting drugs.

"If directors of day centres are to be charged, then that has serious implications for prison governors and head teachers who are also in charge of premises where drugs are being supplied," she said.

Mike Goodman, of the drugs charity Release, said: "Not only does this appear to be an enormous waste of taxpayers' money and a misuse of police resources but it runs entirely contrary to current thinking on how we should be responding to drug prevention and the needs of marginalised groups such as homeless people."

A spokeswoman for Cambridgeshire police confirmed that a file on the two homeless centre managers had been sent to the Crown Prosecution Service. The spokeswoman added that the two remained on police bail and could not confirm that any decision had been taken to charge them.

Adjudicator's hands tied on Ofsted reports

BY BEN RUSSELL
Education Correspondent

THE ADJUDICATOR brought in to rule on complaints made by schools against inspectors criticised aspects of her job yesterday and admitted that she had no power to change disputed reports on schools.

Elaine Rassaby said the fact that she had been appointed by senior officials at the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was "not entirely satisfactory". Ms Rassaby told the Commons Education Select Committee that the appointment should have been made independently, preferably by the Secretary of State for Education.

Instead, Ms Rassaby was appointed by a panel which included Ofsted's head of resources and its director of inspections. She is paid by Ofsted under a one-year contract, which the agency has the power to renew.

The complaints adjudicator insisted that she would prove to be an independent figure, and as such could make public any disputes she might have with Ofsted or with its chief, Chris Woodhead.

The issue is an extremely sensitive one for Ofsted, which has been heavily criticised by teachers and heads.

Ms Rassaby said: "I think my jurisdiction and my remit are quite limited. I'm not in a posi-

tion, and I don't see it as my role, to make judgements about the content of inspections and the standards that have been set ... I'm here as an adjudicator, not as a policymaker."

Ms Rassaby told MPs she would have no power to order changes to inspection reports and could not ask Ofsted to repeat a disputed inspection. She also said she could not challenge the professional conclusions of inspectors, as long as they were backed up by classroom visits. Instead, she said, she could recommend that Ofsted apologise in cases of error, or write to schools setting the record straight. Ofsted could reject the request "in extreme circumstances" but would have to say why.

Ms Rassaby said she expected to deal with around 10 disputed cases a year, but admitted there were problems in Ofsted's complaints procedure for the 200 schools which complain about their treatment each year. "There are barriers in proceeding down Ofsted's own complaints procedure because of the time involved."

Teachers' leaders were sceptical. A spokeswoman for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers said: "Teachers fear that the appointment is no more than a PR stunt. ATL continues to call for the role to be set wider and to be properly independent."

Education tabloid

Audience send off palefaced 'Al Jolson'

AN AL JOLSON impersonator was forced to go on stage with a white face because of politically correct council rules.

But Clive Baldwin's pale imitation was ended by Hull's New Theatre audience, who stopped the show, demanding his face be blacked up. So he defied Hull council guidelines and dabbed on the greasepaint before continuing with "Mammy" - the song made famous by the "blacked-up" Jolson in the first talking picture, *The Jazz Singer*, in 1927.

Hull-born Mr Baldwin, 64, said: "I regard myself as the world's greatest minstrel with

the living voice of Al Jolson. I need to black up because it's the epitome of expression for love of a people who had no voice until Al Jolson gave them one."

Producer John Wray added: "Because of the rules I'd told Clive not to black up, but he got carried away ... The crowd felt cheated and misled. They demanded he put it on." The theatre's programme manager, Michael Lister, said: "(The rules) were introduced in an era of political correctness (12 years ago) after some people objected to (a *Black and White Minstrels Show*) ... It's a difficult one, it really is."

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Call to punish men profiting from sex trade

A LEADING children's charity has called for legislation to punish men making money from the burgeoning trade in child prostitution.

Barnardo's said men across Britain were exploiting children as young as 11 or 12 with little or no likelihood of prosecution. Those who are caught are often charged with no more than kerb-crawling.

"Men are getting away with it because it is considered prostitution when in reality it is nothing other than child abuse," a spokeswoman said. "The term prostitution and the accompanying mental images suggest that a woman has a choice in what she is doing... [but] no girl aged 12 or 13 wakes up one morning and decides she is going to start selling sex."

The charity, which today launches a campaign entitled *Whose Daughter Next?*, believes that many people are not aware of the problem because most children involved are not on the streets. Rather than selling themselves in public most child prostitutes are kept by pimps in flats and rooms.

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

often as prisoners. They may be moved from town to town as business demands.

Barnardo's, which has set up support groups for young girls in several cities, has highlighted a depressing picture in which young girls are lured into prostitution by pimps, themselves often aged between 18 and 25. Often a man will pretend to be the girl's boyfriend.

"Tanya" told the charity: "I was 14 when I met Barry. He was really nice and bought me clothes and presents... He suggested that I earn some money by having sex with a friend who was in town. I refused, but he hit me until I said I would. I remember crying all the time."

has resulted in self-mutilation, overdoses, eating disorders and drug addiction.

The projects, one of which is run in Wolverhampton with the help of the Association of Chief Police Officers, have exploded many of the child prostitution myths. Of the girls helped by the support groups, only a third were previously known to the social services.

Barnardo's wants the Government to set up an inter-departmental task force to look at child prostitution, which it believes is a growing problem involving thousands of girls. It also wants Whitehall to review sentences for unlawful sexual intercourse and to issue new guidelines to the judiciary.

More than one million children are growing up with parents who suffer from serious alcohol abuse, a conference in London will be told today. Organised by the NSPCC, ChildLine, NCH Action for Children and Alcohol Concern, the meeting, entitled *Children of Problem Drinking Parents*, will hear that such children are four times more likely to suffer from psychiatric disorders.



Maureen Lipman and Hugh Jackman, in a production praised by the family of Richard Rodgers. Laurie Lewis

National's 'Oklahoma!' – what a beautiful evening

LAST WEEK the National Theatre appealed to its audiences for cash to keep going. Last night it staged the show that could help solve its problems and become its money-making blockbuster of the Nineties.

Trevor Nunn's revival of *Oklahoma!* has already taken £1.5m at the advance box office. It will now play at the Olivier Theatre every night until October.

The sumptuous revival, whose only household name was Maureen Lipman as Aunt Eller, featured much that was new: new choreography from Susan Stroman, the first time a change of choreography had been allowed; young unknowns in the lead roles and two Rodgers and Hammerstein songs not featured in the original stage production, nor in the Fred Zinneman movie.

Oklahoma! first moved the world in the Forties. When it opened in Britain in 1947 during the era of food rationing, pea-soupers and early show times to conserve electricity, it

FIRST NIGHT
OKLAHOMA!
NATIONAL THEATRE,
LONDON

exhilarated audiences. A young Princess Margaret saw it 27 times. In theatrical history it was the first musical to integrate songs and story, the first to have a dream ballet.

Nunn and Stroman made another first last night. Their actors were dancers too and danced their own dream sequence rather than the usual unsatisfactory staging of the lead actors watching two ballet dancers pretend to be them.

"You have to think of it as if it's brand new," Susan Stroman said in an interview. "That's certainly what we're doing with *Oklahoma!*, which is also about the building of a new America. On the surface it might seem to be a show about who gets the right picnic basket, but it's really much more than that. It's about a time

when everyone had the right to dream."

Trevor Nunn loathes the New York terminology which differentiates between musicals and "legitimate theatre." *Oklahoma!*, he has insisted, is great piece of theatre as well as a great musical, and in his hands it certainly becomes just that.

"It's about the experience of nature," he said recently. "These people find themselves settling in God's acre, in a kind of paradise. They must decide who is going to live there and on what terms. It's a turbulent question. There's a kind of war going on, a war about fences between the cowmen and farmers. It's a very time."

Hugh Jackman, an Australian, who plays the male lead Curly, adds to the insistence that this production redefines a classic. "People have a lot of preconceptions, but we're drawing on the play that the musical was based on – *Green Grow the Lilacs* by Lynn Riggs. It's harsher and the characters are harder-edged."

Nunn calls his production "dirty realist" and eschews the sunny optimism of Zinneman's 1955 movie. But as last night's audience found, an unforgettable score containing "O What a Beautiful Morning", "Surrey with the Fringe on Top", "The Farmer and the Cowman" and "Oklahoma!" itself, have more of an infectious optimism than realism, dirty or otherwise. One leaves this production, happy and singing.

Preview audiences have already been showering it with ecstatic praise, among them no less a critic than Mary Rodgers, daughter of the musical's composer, Richard Rodgers. "The family is stunned," she said.

A blockbuster success will ease the National's financial problems; it will quietly please Trevor Nunn if his musical revival ends up out-gunning Richard Eyre's *Gypsies and Dolls*. And it will delight audiences to see this timeless classic back on the London stage.

DAVID LISTER

Laws urged to catch the 'Mr Bigs'

BY JASON BENNETTO

AMERICAN-STYLE laws to catch back-room criminal "god-fathers" who are evading justice, are being examined by police chiefs, it was revealed yesterday.

Dozens of major criminals are virtually untouchable because they have hired hands to carry out their dangerous work.

The police are aware of suspected criminal overlords who have vast assets obtained from lawbreaking, such as drug trafficking, robbery and bootlegging, but cannot convict them of any offence. Some are living in huge houses, own expensive cars and go on exotic holidays, but have no obvious source of income.

Sir John Hoddinott, Chief Constable of Hampshire and member of the Association of Chief Police Officers' crime committee said: "We're talking about the people who finance it [crime], direct it, but can never be caught... the person who allows or commits criminality but who never has his hand on the gun, the drugs or the money."

Superintendent Robert Golding, of Hampshire Police said: "We're talking about the Mr Bigs who are very difficult to get. There are people who we are confident are involved in criminal activities who we can't touch."

In a policy document presented yesterday at Acpo's conference in Birmingham, the crime committee called for a review of the conspiracy law.

Sir John said that one possible change could be to adopt American-style laws which force suspected criminals to prove how they paid for their possessions. Failure to provide evidence of a legitimate source of income can lead to imprisonment and the seizure of assets.

At present the police rely on using the law of conspiracy in which they must prove that two people have organised a criminal act. This usually involves catching the offenders in the act, which can be extremely difficult. Any change would need legislation by the Government and would be strongly opposed by many lawyers who would argue that existing powers are sufficient.

Police chiefs have asked the recently formed National Crime Squad and the National Criminal Intelligence Service to draw up a list of suspects with vast unexplained assets. NCIS already has a list of about 400 key targets or "core nominals". "We've got in mind the sort of people who have no apparent means of income but have three houses and drive several cars," said Sir John. He said that police chiefs in England and Wales knew of "two or three" suspects in each of the 43 forces. He added that the police would have to have some evidence of wrongdoing before asking them to prove where their assets came from.

"You would have to prove there was a criminal lifestyle," he added.

The bank accounts of all new recruits and many of the existing 1,450 officers in the National Crime Squad will be monitored to ensure they are not taking bribes. It was announced yesterday. A special vetting unit is to be established in the squad as part of an anti-corruption initiative.

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Seventies phobia led to suicide

BY DAMIEN PEARSE

A "TRADITIONAL" pubman whose bar was converted into a trendy 1970s theme pub killed himself after telling his ex-wife he could not bear to wear flares and a wig.

Donald Cameron, 39, believed he would be ridiculed if he ditched his snappy suits for the retro gear of his youth, an inquest in Birmingham was told. The coroner, Dr Richard Whittington, recorded a verdict of suicide on Mr Cameron after hearing how he was driven to despair when the Kaleidoscope nightclub became Flares.

The inquest was told how the father-of-two was found dead in his home-filled car days after a "dumpty run" for the theme pub

in Birmingham city centre. He had been reprimanded for turning up wearing a suit and tie.

The hearing was told how staff at the new Flares club were expected to wear Seventies clothes after it opened last month.

Mr Cameron's former wife, Carol, told the hearing how in the days before his death he had become depressed because he feared he would lose the respect he had built up among the customers and his staff. "He did not want to stand in the pub wearing a 70s outfit and a wig. He said he could not do it."

"He said he would be made to look a fool if he wore the clothes and he felt he could not deal with any trouble in the pub. He thought his people would laugh at him because he looked ludicrous."

Tory seaside casino plan quashed by Government

PLANS BY the previous home secretary Michael Howard to transform the fortunes of some of Britain's seaside towns by encouraging them to open casinos have been quashed by the government.

Mr Howard had envisaged revitalising some of the nation's sleeper resorts by giving them some of the glamour of Las Vegas or Atlantic City. But Home Office minister George Howarth announced last night that a review of casino regulations had concluded that "Great Britain is already well served with casinos and that there is not a compelling case for a large extension to that provision."

The government has consequently rejected proposals for the building of casinos in 21 new permitted areas. Among the towns which were turned down are the Sussex resorts of Eastbourne and Hastings, the West country holiday towns of Weston-super-Mare and Weymouth and the Kent resort of Folkestone.

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

Also rejected was a plan to make a casino out of one of the most glamorous hotels in the north of England, the 60-bedroom art deco Midland Hotel at Morecambe.

Mr Howarth said there were already 53 areas in Britain permitted to have casinos. "We do not consider it appropriate to designate so many

additional areas, particularly those which do not have a significant resident population," he said.

Other towns and cities refused were Bath, Croydon, Dartford, Exeter, Gloucester, Harrogate, Ipswich, Milton Keynes, Norwich, Oxford, Swindon, Telford and York. Proposals for casinos in the London districts of Redbridge and Docklands were also rejected.

Mr Howarth, responding to a parliamentary question, added: "We may wish to make proposals for a small number of additional areas in the future. There would need to be a good case on population grounds and any proposal would also need local authority and public support."

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Chinese lift embargo on Taiwan flights

CHAOS AT the cargo terminal in Hong Kong's new airport and a ground-breaking trip to Taiwan by a member of the Chinese government have combined to produce an unexpected thaw in relations between the two countries, which both claim to be China.

The problems at Hong Kong airport have prompted a tentative move to establish direct flights from Taiwan to an airport on the Chinese mainland.

The Taiwan government has begun to allow cargo planes to fly direct to Shenzhen airport which is close to the Hong Kong border.

This breaks a five decades long embargo on direct flights between Taiwan and China. All air traffic between the two states had been routed through Hong Kong and, more recently, via the new Macau airport in the Portuguese enclave.

Direct flights between Taiwan and China are on the agenda for talks, but formal negotiations between the two sides have been stalled for the past 30 months following China's protests over Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's "unofficial" visit to the United States.

It seems unlikely that the air

BY STEPHEN VINES
in Hong Kong

route from Taipei, the Taiwanese capital, to Shenzhen is being opened on a permanent basis.

A tentative move to open direct shipping links between the two states began in January 1997, but remains limited as the bulk of shipping cargoes still pass through Hong Kong.

Meanwhile Zhu Lilan, China's minister of science and technology, has become the first serving cabinet member to visit Taiwan since 1949.

To preserve the niceties she was invited in her capacity as a Beijing University professor to attend a seminar on technology research exchanges between China and Taiwan.

However, the political significance of the visit is hard to underestimate. Official government-to-government meetings are very rare. All negotiations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are conducted by semi-official bodies whose activities can be disowned if need be.

China is now piling on the pressure for a resumption of cross-Straits talks, but without making the kind of concessions

acceptable to the Taiwan.

Indeed, the Chinese hardline position was bolstered by President Clinton's recent visit to Peking where he spelt out the famous "three nos" of United States policy.

He stressed that America did not support independence for Taiwan, was against any solution which created "two Chinas"; and would oppose Taiwanese membership of international organisations like the United Nations.

The Americans insist that Mr Clinton's statement does not represent a change of policy. However, Taipei had urged the Americans not to encourage Peking by spelling out its opposition to any moves that might allow Taiwan to function as a normal sovereign state.

In many ways, this was the biggest prize which China secured from the Clinton visit and is likely to complicate the meaningful resumption of talks on cross-Straits relations.

This is why it is possible to have a breakthrough ministerial visit and a move toward the assumption of direct ties between the two countries while broader attempts to negotiate better relations between Taiwan and China still flounder.



South Vietnamese executioner dies

NGUYEN NGOC Loan, the South Vietnamese general whose summary execution of a bound prisoner was depicted in a photograph (above) that stunned the world three decades ago, has died. He was 67.

Mr Loan died of cancer on

BY DALE HOPPER

Tuesday at his home in Washington DC in the United States, his daughter Nguyen Anh said.

The photo by Eddie Adams of General Loan aiming a pistol at the prisoner's head mo-

ments before the trigger was pulled on 1 February 1968, became a haunting image of the Vietnam War. It won a Pulitzer prize for Associated Press.

At the time, the general was head of South Vietnam's police. The North Vietnamese had

begun the Tet Offensive southward, the previous month and Loan's police were trying to rid the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon, of Viet Cong guerrillas.

Shortly after Mr Adams and other journalists arrived, General Loan led the prisoner, hands

bound, onto a street corner, drew his handgun and shot him in the head. The general told the journalists that the prisoner was a known Viet Cong captain.

General Loan fled South Vietnam in 1975, the year Communists overran the country.

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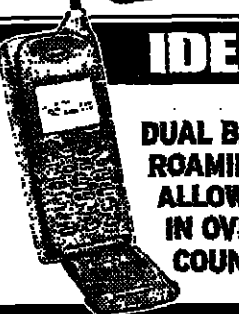
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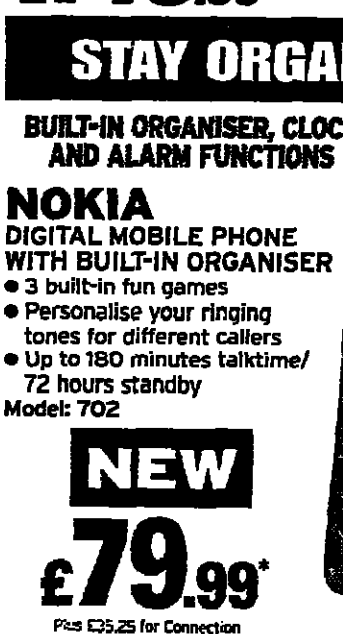
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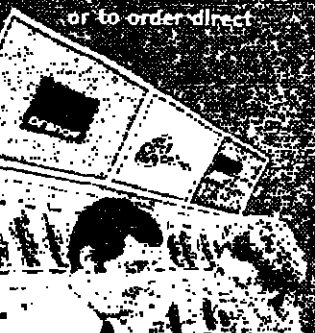
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Hong Kong steers clear of democracy

AT THE best of times Hong Kong's Legislative Council is slightly surreal. Yesterday surrealism reached new heights as members overwhelmingly voted down a resolution suggesting that the legislature should be democratically elected in 2000 and that the head of government should also be elected two years later.

"We should not fantasise about the magic of democracy," said Bernard Chan, who represents one of the most rotten of the rotten boroughs which have seats in the legislature. He represents the insurance industry which has only 193 eligible voters.

Those elected by direct election in geographical constituencies needed literally hundreds of thousands of votes to secure their place in the chamber. Lee Cheuk-yan, one of the directly elected members, bluntly explained the difficulties

BY STEPHEN VINES
in Hong Kong

of the task facing those asking the rotten borough representatives to give up their seats. It's like a first class passenger being asked to travel economy, he said, or "like asking a tiger to give its skin to us".

The tigers nodded in agreement. However no one actually said universal franchise was a bad idea nor that democracy was necessarily a bad thing.

After all under Hong Kong's mini-constitution, called the Basic Law, a review will be held in 2007 which might, just might, result in the establishment of universal suffrage.

Spelling out the government's opposition to any acceleration of this programme was Michael Suen, the constitutional affairs secretary. Mr Suen is very much the bureaucrat's bureaucrat.

He made it clear that he was all in favour of democracy but there were many problems. For example his department was already preparing for elections in 2000 and it would be difficult to make new arrangements; moreover any changes had to "studied in depth", which would take at least 10 years.

"The clinching argument was that if all seats in the legislature were directly elected, 'sooner or later the legislature is likely to have a majority party'. That, he said, was a problem because Hong Kong was supposed to have an executive-led government.

"No one can guarantee that a majority party will always support the government," Mr Suen said. "If so, what will happen to the administration?" The idea that the executive arm of government might also be elected seemed not to occur to him.

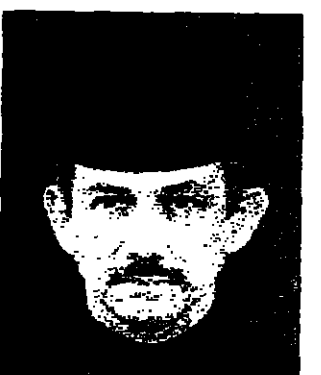
Sultan hands out huge gifts despite his woes

BY STEVE CRAWSHAW

HE HAS had a terrible few weeks. First he woke up to find that, with only \$36bn (£22bn) to his name, he was no longer deemed to be the world's richest man (that mantle has passed to Bill Gates). Then his younger brother's business empire was reported to have collapsed, with losses of billions of pounds. Given such problems, the least a man can do is to celebrate his birthday in style.

So the Sultan of Brunei decided to do just that. To mark his 52nd birthday yesterday he announced that all government employees would receive pay rises of up to 14 per cent, costing \$600,000 across the board. This reflected his call for "prudence" and "austerity measures", after fireworks and a military parade.

The Sultan made no mention of the collapsed Amedeo Development Corporation, run by his younger brother Prince Jefri (owner of 600 cars, and a



The Sultan of Brunei

rency reserves. Speaking from his 1,788-room palace, the Sultan — a polo-playing partner of the Prince of Wales — made it clear that pessimism was not on the agenda in Brunei.

He declared: "Whatever has been experienced, or is being experienced by the country, is all history."

The Sultan, whose properties across the world include the Dorchester Hotel on Park Lane, has always had a penchant for lavish gestures. On his fiftieth birthday he treated his subjects to a concert by Michael Jackson, specially flown in. Brunei has a high standard of living but has suffered from a 40 per cent slump in the price of oil, which has been almost entirely responsible for its wealth. Yesterday the Sultan was still determined to celebrate. Fireworks and a parade kicked off the traditional month-long celebration to mark his birthday. He himself drove through the parade in a Land Rover, seated on gold-velvet cushions and shaded by an attendant with a parasol.

DAVID AARONOVITCH

"So miserly did Mr Maude seem, that my daughters have become convinced that he is really called Frances Maude, and that he is Pollyanna's mean-spirited cousin"

THE THURSDAY REVIEW, PAGE 3

50 من الاميل

Teenagers who stand in the way of the Shining Path

MORGAN MAGALLANES and Victor Rondinel are in many ways typical teenagers. They enjoy hanging around together when they are not working, and when they have extra time and money, a quick trip from their small home town to nearest big city is a treat.

In their case, this journey takes them from Tambillo to Huamanga, the capital of Ayacucho, in Peru's central Andes.

The similarities stop there. Magallanes, 16, and Rondinel, 19, are seasoned fighters in Peru's internal conflict that pits the government against the Maoist Shining Path.

The young men are members of Tambillo's civil defence patrol, known as rondas, which have been a frontline defence against Shining Path guerrillas since the late 1980s.

"We are fighting terrorism. The Shining Path could come back at any minute; they are

trying to rearm. They are bad for the people," Rondinel says. Shining Path guerrillas ran rampant over Peru's central highlands for most of the 1980s, terrorising villagers and setting them up for reprisals by the country's armed forces.

For years, the Peruvian military accepted Shining Path's claim that the campesinos were ripe for revolution and did not give a second thought to wiping out whole villages believed to support the Maoist agenda.

The guerrillas were dealt a near fatal blow in 1992 with the capture of their leader, Abimael Guzman, and many once-convulsed areas such as Ayacucho are now experiencing peace.

Local residents and students of the Shining Path, however, fear that the group is involved in a new campaign to recruit and rearm.

David Scott Palmer, an



American academic who first taught at the San Cristobal University in Huamanga in the early 1990s, is back as a visiting Fulbright scholar. He has been studying the Shining Path for years and says that the guerrilla group, although wounded, is not yet dead.

"The question is not when will the Shining Path come back, but how. I think you can write off the MRTA (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Move-

ment, a small armed group), but I don't think you can write off the Shining Path. They are in the midst of an internal struggle and I think a more moderate faction will prevail."

Victor Rondinel says he is not afraid, because the rondas are prepared. "We will fight them until the end."

Magallanes and Rondinel were among hundreds of rondos from Ayacucho and neighbouring areas who congregated in Huamanga for an annual show of force.

Armed with antiquated shotguns, sling shots and homemade rifles, the rondos paraded recently around Huamanga's square for their seventh annual meeting.

Military brass, city officials and Ayacucho Archbishop

Juan Luis Cipriani were there to applaud the fighters. "The country has a debt to the rondas. They helped restore peace to the nation," Cipriani said.

The rondas have a chequered history in their war against the Shining Path. One of the earliest examples of efforts to get communities organised to fight the Shining Path was blamed for the massacre of eight journalists in the high Ayacucho town of Uchuraccay.

No one is quite sure what led the civil defence patrol to kill the journalists, but the murders gave the nascent movement a negative image that took years to overcome.

"If it wasn't for Uchuraccay the rondos would have ex-



Relatives of Shining Path prisoners rally in protest outside Canto Grande prison near Lima. Vera Lente

panded much earlier to fight the Shining Path. Because of what happened there we were delayed nearly five years," said Pompey Javier Rivera, better known in Peru as Commander Huayhuaco.

As a leader of the one of the first rondas organised to fight the subversives, Huayhuaco led a group of men in 1988 on a raid against communities he

rights violations, including murder, as well as involvement in drug trafficking. He spent three years in prison.

Huayhuaco's present relationship with the military reflects the changing image Peru's armed forces have had toward the rondos. The commander has been rejected and accepted several times by the military over the years.

"It took time, but the military came around to the idea that civil participation was necessary to defeat terrorism. The peace we enjoy today is the fruit of the military and civilians working together."

However, it may be time to demilitarise the rondos. He says they are getting tired of carrying weapons and want to return to farming.

"Our hope is that we can exchange our weapons for tools. Subversion will never return if the people have work," he says.

Mystery hunter appears in the outback

AUSTRALIAN POLICE are investigating a massive drawing of an Aboriginal hunter (right) that suddenly appeared on a remote patch of desert outback in a mystery reminiscent of Britain's 'corn circles'.

No one has so far claimed responsibility for the 2.5-mile-long outline drawn into the dust near Finnis Springs in the north of the state of South Australia.

Locals from the nearby township of Marree think that the figure was carved using a plough, possibly pulled by a tractor, but there are no wheel marks at the site.

From the air, the outline shows what appears to be an Aboriginal man holding a spear.

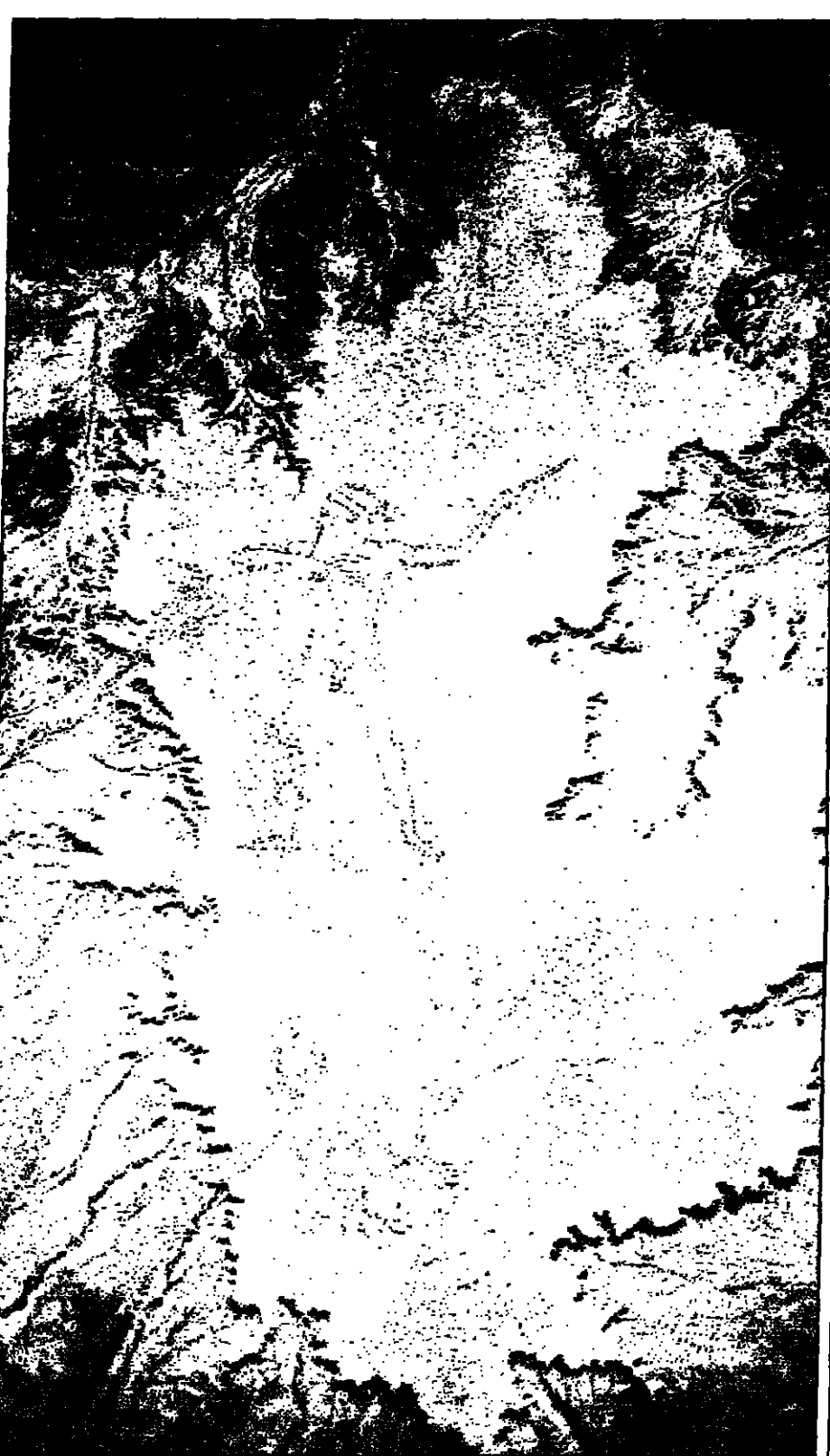
Police have found a number of clues, including what is believed to be a satellite photograph of the figure, a small US flag and a note believed to refer to the Branch Davidian cult in the US.

Ray Goss, a local resident, told the *The Australian* newspaper that he and a group of friends found the etching after anonymous directions were faxed to the Marree hotel last week.

The fax claimed the drawing "is the world's largest work of art". It is five times the size of the largest human figure at the famous Nazca site in Peru.

Local policeman Paul Liersch said the etching may be an attempt to lure tourists. He said the creators were probably from close to home. "I found toilet paper out there so, if it has been done from space, they're fairly much like us."

The state Aboriginal Affairs Department said today it will investigate the figure.



The 2.5-mile-long aboriginal hunter scratched into the desert north of Adelaide.

US right campaigns to 'convert' gays

A COALITION of conservative and religious organisations has launched a new campaign against homosexuality, capitalising on what appears to be a hardening of anti-gay sentiment in Congress in the run-up to mid-term elections in autumn.

In a new departure, however, the campaign eschews fire and brimstone rhetoric in favour of compassion and an all-American confidence in the capacity of individuals to change.

Newspaper advertisements running this week in major dailies are headed: "Toward a new national discussion of homosexuality." "We're standing for the truth that homosexuals can change," the advert says, praising prominent figures in politics, showbusiness and sport for "having the courage to speak the truth about sexual sin".

Affecting more sorrow than anger, the first advert in the se-

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

ries says: "Most Christians who speak out against homosexual behaviour are motivated more by love than hate. Of course, 'hate' gets all the headlines, but... we believe every human being is precious to God and is entitled to respect. But when we see great suffering among homosexuals, it's an inherent Christian calling to show compassion and concern."

The second carries a picture of Reggie White, the black football star and minister, over the headline: "In defense of free speech." Without free speech, the advert says, we might never have learned "the truth about the non-genetic roots of homosexuality" or that "thousands are leaving their homosexual identity for sexual celibacy and even marriage."

Gay groups hit back yesterday with an advert of their own

in the same format and in the same newspapers.

Headed "Towards hope and healing for America", it shows a happy trio - parents and daughter - with the legend: "We're living proof that families with lesbian and gay kids can be whole, happy and worthy of all that this great country promises."

Its underlying argument is that homosexuals are no less family and church-orientated than any other American.

The upsurge in the debate can be dated to a calculated outburst from the Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott, last month, when he grouped homosexuals with alcoholics, kleptomaniacs and sex addicts as people who are sick and can be cured - but only if they want to be.

He had been criticised by the conservative right for giving President Bill Clinton too easy a ride on moral issues and not

being forceful enough on issues like abortion - and homosexuality.

With the slight possibility that the Republicans could lose control of the Senate in November, Mr Lott (and his Congressmen) need the support of the influential, and wealthy, conservative right.

So far this year it has blocked payment of US debts to the UN (over funding for Third World birth control) and the appointment of Mr Clinton's nominee to be ambassador to Luxembourg, James Hormal, who is gay.

Any anti-gay campaign, however, holds political risks for the Republicans.

Polls indicate that the mood of the country is not as stridently anti-homosexual as it used to be, and that - at least in some parts of the country - witch-hunts against particular groups stand to alienate as many voters as they attract.

IN BRIEF

UN may have to quit Afghanistan after Taliban steps up pressure

THE UNITED NATIONS may have to withdraw its workers from Afghanistan. The UN envoy there, Lakhdar Brahimi, said the ruling Taliban are violating a May agreement with unacceptable restrictions on aid workers. The strictly Islamic Taliban recently forced aid workers in Kabul to move to abandoned dormitories for "security precautions". The Taliban have forced girls out of schools and women out of jobs.

Russian hopes for IMF bail-out

THE RUSSIAN Duma met in a special session yesterday and passed some of the laws sought by the government to secure a promised multi-billion-dollar bail-out from global creditors. The board of the International Monetary Fund may approve on 20 July the first \$6bn tranche of the overall funding package agreed on Monday. But its agreement is at least partially conditional on Duma approval of austerity measures.

European Parliament poll reform

THE EUROPEAN Parliament took a small step yesterday towards fulfilling a 40-year-old democratic dream, agreeing on a proposal for its 627 members to be elected in a similar way. "We are going one step further towards implementing the (1957) Treaty of Rome, which called for a uniform electoral procedure for the European Parliament," said a Dutch member, Gijb de Vries. A separate demand was made this week for members to be paid the same amount.

US Hispanic community growing

IN THE United States, the Hispanic community will be the largest minority group within seven years, and will outnumber all other minorities by 2050, the Census Bureau said. Hispanics and blacks make up about 15 per cent of children in the US, with Hispanics concentrated in the west and south-west. One in four of the foreign-born population of the US (about seven million), were born in Mexico and half in Central or South America or the Caribbean.

Troops to quell Zulu clashes

By EMELIA SITOLE
in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA began to flood troops into the province of KwaZulu-Natal yesterday to contain an explosion of violence between rival parties already eyeing next year's second democratic election.

Sydney Mufamadi, the Safety and Security Minister, told South African radio that the government had asked the army to double the number of soldiers in the town of Richmond, 500 kilometres south-east of Johannesburg, to 240. Another 240 policemen would be deployed following the transfer of some policemen suspected of collusion in the violence. "We will deploy as many people as required," said Mr Mufamadi.

An estimated 24 people have been killed in the past 10 days in a fresh outbreak of violence in the province, where turf wars between the African National Congress (ANC) and its arch-foe, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), have divided the Zulu population for 14 years.

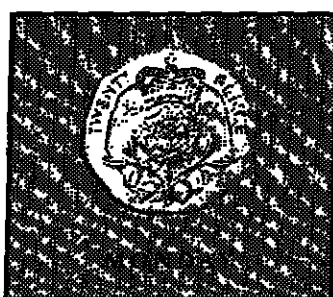
Around 14,000 people died in KwaZulu-Natal in the decade to 1994 in conflict mainly between the ANC and the IFP. The fight-

ing has subsided since, but now seems to be threatening to flare anew in the lush hillside villages as a third party enters the battle for political turf.

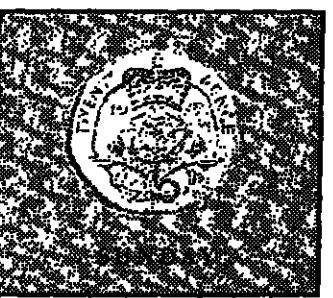
The ANC, which failed to win control of the province in the country's first all-race elections in 1994, has accused the newly established United Democratic Movement (UDM) of fanning the violence around Richmond.

"Political parties are going to start campaigning and unless measures are taken to ensure that politics of intimidation don't become more important than democratic processes, we could see a major escalation of the conflict not only in Richmond but also in the whole province," said Jenni Irish, of the non-governmental Violence Monitors.

The UDM - formed as a breakaway from President Nelson Mandela's ANC after it ousted one of the new party's key leaders - denies causing the violence, saying the ANC is at fault. The UDM is headed in KwaZulu-Natal by Sifiso Nkabinde, who called himself an ANC "warlord" until he was expelled from the party last year amid allegations he spied for the police under apartheid.



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Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
News desk: 0171-293 2836 Fax: 0171-293 2098
E-mail: IndyBusiness@Independent.co.uk

BUSINESS

Shares shrug off concerns over pay, jobs and rates

- PricewaterhouseCoopers warns of £20bn deficit in 2001/02
- MPC worries that quarter-point hike will not be enough
- Brown stresses spending plans assume cautious growth estimates



Yesterday Gordon Brown defended his spending plans before MPs on the Treasury Select Committee, with whom he is pictured above. The Chancellor said the plans were based on 'cautious' forecasts

BRIEFING

Paris seeks to join Euro alliance

THE PARIS stock exchange is considering linking up with other bourses - including the New York Stock Exchange - in an attempt to rival the recently announced alliance between the London Stock Exchange and Frankfurt's Deutsche Börse, according to French newspaper reports. Last week, the London Stock Exchange and the Deutsche Börse surprised the financial markets by announcing they were to join forces and develop a single European stock market.

Rolf Breuer, chairman of Deutsche Bank and president of the Deutsche Börse, has said that the success of the London-Frankfurt alliance depends on the involvement of other European stock exchanges. The Belgian stock exchange and the Dutch exchange have already signalled that they are keen to join the London-Frankfurt partnership.

Photo-Me drives forward

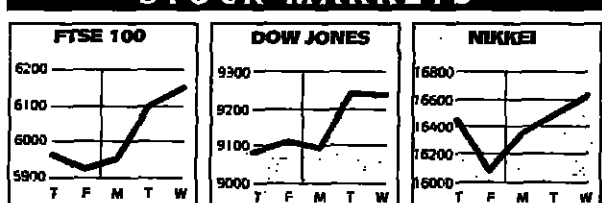
Shares in Photo-Me International, Britain's largest operator of photo booths, rose sharply yesterday after the company disclosed the potential impact of the new photocard driving licences. The shares rose 38.5p to 372.5p as the company, headed by Peter Ogbourne (left), said the new licences could create demand for 40,000 more sets of photos per month rising to over 500,000 a month by mid-1999. The new licences come into force for new drivers passing their tests next month.

Investment column, page 21

Market Wizard wound up

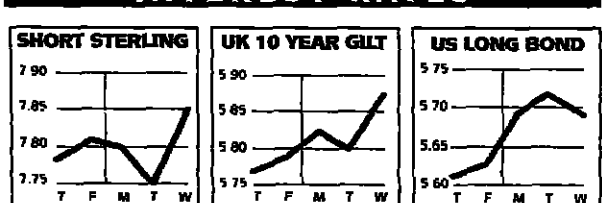
The DTI has sent in the Official Receiver to wind up Market Wizard Systems, the first-ever company to be closed down because it offered a software system to the public which gave investment advice without being authorised to do so. Mr Justice Carnwath yesterday approved the petition brought by the DTI under section 124A of the Insolvency Act 1986, which enables it to liquidate companies in the public interest. Wizard actively marketed and sold to individuals and companies a software analysis programme, "the MWS system," which generated buy and sell prompt signals for options traded on Life in 12 blue chip stocks. This meant Wizard was offering investment advice, the DTI said.

STOCK MARKETS



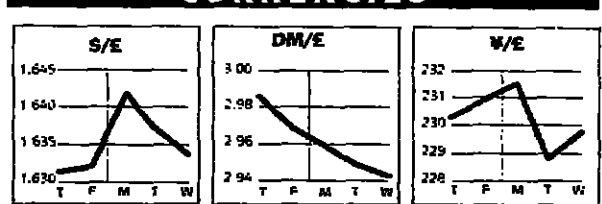
Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6151.50	51.30	0.84	6150.50	4392.80	3.72
FTSE 250	5597.10	39.80	0.70	5570.90	4421.60	3.35
FTSE 350	3255.70	24.90	0.82	3240.10	2141.80	3.65
FTSE All Share	2873.60	22.21	0.78	2872.04	2106.59	3.63
FTSE SmallCap	2581.60	4.80	0.19	2793.80	2182.10	3.22
FTSE Fledgling	1414.50	2.10	0.15	1517.10	1225.20	3.38
FTSE AIM	1092.80	-2.30	-0.21	1146.90	965.90	1.19
FTSE EBLCC 100	1108.40	7.49	0.68			
Dow Jones	9240.91	-8.24	-0.09	9261.91	6971.32	1.58
Nikkei	14614.12	125.23	0.76	14698.67	14406.21	0.92
Hang Seng	8456.22	277.29	3.39	16820.31	7351.68	4.24
Dax	6108.24	12.96	0.21	6096.46	3487.24	2.65

INTEREST RATES



Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 year	Yr chg	Long bond	Yr chg
UK	7.77	0.75	7.91	0.42	5.87	-1.23	5.45	-1.60
US	5.69	-0.06	5.81	-0.22	5.46	-89.93	5.69	-0.85
Japan	0.64	0.01	0.66	-0.14	1.72	-0.85	2.26	-0.80
Germany	3.54	0.39	3.81	0.46	4.68	-0.95	5.31	-1.12

CURRENCIES



POUND				DOLLAR			
	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6340	-0.35c	1.6760	Sterling	0.6120	+0.13p	0.5967
D-Mark	2.9415	-0.88pf	3.0213	D-Mark	1.2013	+0.03pf	1.8025
Yen	228.89	+0.06	194.22	Yen	140.69	+0.81	115.68
£ index	104.90	0.00	105.10	\$ index	112.70	+0.00	103.80

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close	Chg	Yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	12.08	-0.36	18.20	GDP 114.80	3.00	111.46	Aug.
Gold (\$)	293.05	-0.10	318.05	RPI	163.40	3.70	157.57
Silver (\$)	5.32	-0.01	4.28	Base Rates	7.50		6.75

www.bloomberg.com/uk SOURCE: BLOOMBERG

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.5414	Mexican (nuevo peso)	13.32
Austria (schillings)	20.07	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2198
Belgium (francs)	59.02	New Zealand (\$)	3.0018
Canada (\$)	2.3632	Norway (krone)	12.22
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8356	Portugal (escudos)	290.11
Saudi Arabia (rials)	10.96	Spain (pesetas)	242.07
Finland (markka)	8.7429	South Africa (rand)	9.4963
France (francs)	9.5802	Sweden (krone)	12.82
Germany (marks)	2.3695	Switzerland (francs)	2.4158
Greece (drachma)	472.66	Thailand (bahts)	60.92
Hong Kong (\$)	12.30	Turkey (liras)	424.037
Ireland (pounds)	1.1337	USA (\$)	1.5989
India (rupees)	64.09		
Israel (shekels)	5.5377		
Italy (lira)	2830		
Japan (yen)	225.59		
Malaysia (ringgits)	6.5091		
Malta (lira)	0.6214		

THE STOCK MARKET yesterday shrugged off renewed fears of an interest-rate rise to close at a record high. However, the pound strengthened against the Deutschmark after official figures revealed continued strong growth in UK earnings.

In April, UK headline average earnings grew by 5.4 per cent, the fastest rate of growth since September 1992. The unexpected jump in earnings growth - which was partly due to increased bonus payments - came despite new evidence of increasing unemployment.

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed that the claimant count - one measure of unemployment - rose again in June for the second month in the row and was 700 higher than in May. In May 4,200 more people were claiming benefits than in April, the ONS said. This was the first time the UK had seen a rise in the claimant count in successive months since November and December 1992.

The stronger-than-expected increase in average earnings renewed fears that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) could raise rates again at next month's meeting. Richard Leese at ABN Amro commented: "These data may well panic the MPC into a final touch on the monetary brakes. More importantly, they once again underline that any talk of falling rates is premature."

Market sentiment was not helped by the publication of the minutes of the June MPC meeting - the month when the com-

BY LEA PATERSON

mittee surprised both industry and the City by putting up interest rates by 0.25 points to 7.5 per cent.

The minutes highlighted concerns about the rate of growth in earnings and the impact of the exchange rate on inflation. They also show that the MPC feared that the 0.25-point rate hike in June would not be sufficient to choke off demand.

According to the minutes - which showed that the MPC voted eight-to-one in favour of raising rates by 0.25 points: "The question was raised (at the June meeting) as to whether a quarter-point rise in rates would prove sufficient, particularly if the spike in headline RPI inflation fed through to earnings growth."

As was widely anticipated in the City, Dr DeAnne Julius, the former British Airways chief economist, was the only MPC member to vote against the rate hike. Dr Julius proposed that rates should be cut, the minutes of the MPC meeting revealed.

Interest-rate hike fears were also fuelled by worries about the impact of the Chancellor's expenditure plans on the economy.

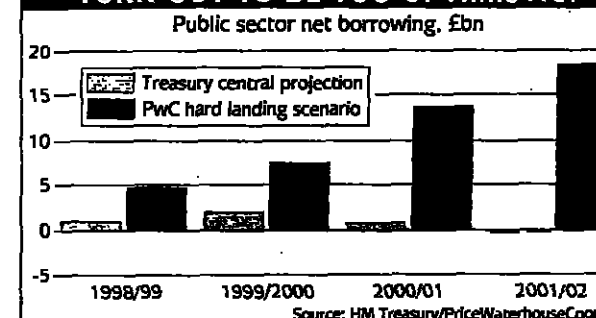
The Chancellor plans to increase total expenditure by 2.75 per cent in real terms each year for the next three years, with the lion's share of the extra going to health and education. Critics of the plans have expressed concerns that if the Chancellor's economic forecasts prove to be too optimistic, the budget deficit could be far

higher than the Treasury is currently predicting.

PricewaterhouseCoopers yesterday warned that if there is a hard landing in the UK - that is, if growth slows very sharply - the budget deficit in 2001/02 could approach £20bn. The Treasury, by contrast, is predicting that its books will balance in 2001/02, and Mr Brown yesterday defended his plans in front of MPs on the Treasury Select Committee, saying they were based on "cautious" forecasts.

In his Select Committee appearance, the Chancellor took the opportunity to drive home the dangers of overly-generous pay awards. He told MPs: "A wage rise today could mean the

WHAT IF GORDON BROWN'S FIGURES TURN OUT TO BE TOO OPTIMISTIC?



risk of an interest-rate rise tomorrow, and that was exactly the position the Bank of England took last month. It is quite clear to me that wages in the private sector have been rising

grew by 6.2 per cent in April - this was 0.1 points higher than the increase in March.

Despite the fears about the inflationary impact of the earnings data and the Chancellor's spending plans, the FTSE 100 powered ahead - spurred on by positive sentiment in global markets - and finished the day up 51.3 at 6,151.5, a record close. The index was as high as 6,179.8 earlier yesterday, but softened slightly following the publication of the earnings data.

The pound proved to be more sensitive to changes in interest-rate expectations than the FTSE. Sterling finished the day up 0.4 pence at DM 2.945.

Outlook, page 17

PO plea on £1bn card scheme 2,000 jobs in forecourt deal

POST OFFICE executives yesterday urged the Government

BY MICHAEL HARRISON

not to abandon a £1bn scheme to automate Social Security benefit payments amid signs that the troubled project will be shelved this autumn.

The project, designed to stamp out benefit fraud by replacing girocheques and pension books with electronic swipe cards, is two years behind schedule and over budget.

Pathway, a consortium led by the information technology group ICL, has invested £125m on the project, but the system is only in operation in 210 of the Post Office's 19,000 outlets.

John Roberts, chief executive of the Post Office, insisted yesterday that the roll-out of the system was continuing suc-

cessfully. Asked whether he feared it might be scrapped, he said: "I hope not. We have a very strong view that this is the right way forward and we have made that clear."

Mr Roberts was speaking as the Post Office unveiled record profits of £651m last year, but warned that its financial performance would not be sustained unless the Government gave it commercial freedom quickly.

Describing Pathway as a "good project and a good commercial deal," he said that both the Post Office and ICL were pleased with the system.

However, there are reports that ICL may sue the Govern-

ment if it reneges on the contract, while Treasury officials are understood to be considering legal action against ICL.

Ministers are thought to want to abandon the project and instead pay Social Security benefits direct into bank accounts through automatic credit transfer. This would make a bigger dent in the £4bn benefit fraud bill than the taxpayer benefits direct into bank accounts through automatic credit transfer.

The Post Office wants to use the smart card not just to dispense Social Security benefits, but for other uses like banking and insurance services to the payment of utility bills and car road tax.

The Post Office beat virtually all of its productivity and financial targets last year, and returned £558m to the Exchequer in the shape of £338m contributed through its External Finance Limit and £217m paid in tax.

Neville Bain, chairman, warned that Post Office services would suffer unless the organisation was given real commercial freedom to borrow on the private markets, enter joint ventures and expand abroad.

The Department of Trade and Industry is carrying out a review, including the option of floating up to 49 per cent of the Post Office. A decision is due this autumn, but the indications are that the timing is slipping.

Outlook, page 17

SIB chief's £288,000 golden goodbye

ANDREW WINCKLER, former

chief executive of the Securities and Investments Board, was given a golden goodbye of £288,000 when he left the regulator in January, it has emerged, writes Andrew Verity.

The pay-off was given to Mr Winckler for loss of office following the launch of the new regulator, the Financial Ser-

vices Authority. It brings his total pay and compensation for 10 months' work to £499,670 - more than the rest of the FSA's directors put together.

The news will reignite a row over favourable contracts offered to senior regulators.

Top executives have been able to reap huge rewards when they claimed their terms

of employment have changed. Colette Bowe, former chief executive of the Personal Investment Authority, received £281,000 in redundancy pay when she left in January. Her total package for the year amounted to £477,000.

Mr Winckler, under SIB's then chairman Sir Andrew Large, was in charge of supervising junior regulators as they carried out the much-criticised pension mis-selling review.

The review, launched in October 1994, was supposed to clear up 600,000 urgent cases of possible mis-selling by the end of 1996. However, only a minority had been reviewed by the time Labour came to power in May 1997.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

BLUE CHIPS surged to a new high with Footsie closing 51.3 points higher at 6,151.5. At one time it was up almost 80. In two days the index has gained 193.3. Financial shares were again strong, still attracting support ahead of the banks' profit season which gets under way towards the end of the month. Cable & Wireless rose 32p to 842p on expectations it will clinch a deal to buy the internet business of MCI. The US group, and BT rose 14p to 817p following a signalled share buyback after the sale of its MCI stake. Derek Pain, page 21

NEW YORK

US BLUE CHIPS posted marginal gains and technology stocks firmed as investors sifted through an uneven series of earnings reports. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up six points at 9251 shortly after midday. Eastman Kodak was by far the strongest Dow component, surging after reporting surprisingly strong earnings. The Nasdaq index also rallied 12 points to 1880, extending a record run that has seen the index post five straight all-time highs in a run toward the 2000 level.

TOKYO

STOCKS IN Tokyo closed moderately higher but trading was dominated by a wait-and-see stance ahead of the selection of a replacement for Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. Traders said. The key Nikkei 225 average finished with a gain of 125.23 points, or 0.76 per cent, at 16,614.14. The market briefly came under downward pressure as news that Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi would today announce his candidacy to replace Hashimoto raised concerns. Some traders said market attention was drawn to who will be the new finance minister.

PARIS

A DAY of euphoric trade culminated in the 17th closing high of the year as Paris stocks followed the Dow's strong lead. The blue-chip CAC-40 index closed up 2.07 per cent at 4,344.30. Mid-afternoon, the index reached 4,361.13, just a whisker away from its all-time best of 4,363.22. From kick-off to the final whistle, the bourse sped to catch up with strong US and European markets. France's four-day Bastille weekend inspired World Cup trading fever, some brokers said.

FRANKFURT

GERMANY'S DAX index surrendered early highs as investors took profits on recent gains, but market sentiment remained buoyant. By the close, the benchmark DAX was only up 4.2 points at 6106.1, after earlier hitting a record high of 6,150.47 points. "There is no other reason to fall than that the market is taking a bit of a breather. It surprised us a bit with how quickly it did come off but we have had a very strong day [on Tuesday] and profits are being taken," one dealer said.

Time to unshackle the Post Office

OH DEAR. Everything seems to be going horribly well for the Post Office. Every year the organisation warns that Armageddon is just around the corner unless it is given commercial freedom or privatised, and every year the evidence inconveniently points in the opposite direction. It was no exception in 1997/98. Profits hit a new high of £551m and the Royal Mail is now handling a record 75 million letters a day. Furthermore, record numbers of them are actually arriving on time.

Even Parcelforce, the one blot on the landscape, cut its losses and would have met its target of breaking into profit had it not been for the lingering effects of the posties' strike action the previous year. Despite all this, Neville Bain, the Post Office's Antipodean chairman, suppresses his smile of self-satisfaction and warns that the good times cannot last much longer. The Post Office has grand plans to invest £2.7bn over the next five years and it would like to continue the freeze on letter prices beyond next April. But how can it do any of this when the Treasury sucks up 90 per cent of profits through the External Finance Limit (the Exchequer's version of dividend payments) and



OUTLOOK

taxation? Mark Mr Bain's words. If the shackles are not loosened, and fast, then before the Millennium is out, your junk mail will be arriving courtesy of the Dutch and the Germans, while the Post Office will still have to run to Mr Brown every time it wants to invest more than £5m. Over to the Department of Trade and Industry, where Margaret Beckett and her even less-reconstructed minister, Ian McCartney, say they want to give Mr Bain his commercial freedom, but balk at the obvious private sector solution. The DTI has promised it will get back to Mr Bain by the autumn. But with Mr Brown and Mr Blair now in on the act, and apparently at odds

over the way forward, the chances of a reply this side of Christmas begin to look thin.

Michael Heseltine spent two years trying to unshackle the Post Office, but was overcome by Tory backwoodsmen fearful for rural offices. Since the Treasury is milking this cash cow for £550m a year, the temptation to do nothing again must be powerful. Surely only a very big hole in Mr Brown's spending sums would tempt him into anything as radical as a 49 per cent flotation.

The hazards of MPC predicting

LET'S CALL it Threadneedleology (any suggestions for a better term much appreciated). This is the study of Monetary Policy Committee decision making - which way the members have voted on interest rates and how they might vote in future. The term is borrowed from the now deceased Western art of trying to figure out what was going on in the Kremlin - Kremlinology. The parallel is inexact. The beauty of being a Kremlinologist was that as nobody knew or was ever

likely to know the truth of what was happening in the higher echelons of the Soviet machine, no one could ever prove you wrong. No such luck with Threadneedleology. Since the minutes of the MPC's meetings are published six weeks later. Any supposed insights, predictions and insider knowledge are thus cruelly exposed eventually to what all too often proves an embarrassing comparison with the truth.

The City gets it wrong on the MPC all the time. It did so spectacularly with June's decision to raise interest rates by 0.25 points. Nor, as we now know, was the vote even close. MPC members voted by eight-to-one to increase rates. Furthermore, they worried whether a quarter-point would be enough.

The mistake cost many securities houses dear. The great bulk of them were wrongfooted in the futures markets as a result. But it is not just the City's highly-paid pundits and economists who are getting it wrong. Post the event, one newspaper (not this one), claimed as an exclusive that David Clementi, deputy governor of the Bank of England, had broken ranks with his Bank of England colleagues to oppose a rise. We now know he did not.

Having failed to sway the MPC with their view of what should be done and inaccurately predicted what it would actually do, analysts have fallen back on a time honoured line of defence. This is to plead that it is not they, the analysts, who are getting it wrong, but the MPC and its members, who have been making some poor decisions.

Actually, this is just sour grapes. Nobody can ever know for certain what the MPC is going to do, but by paying attention to its brief (which is to meet the Government's inflation target) and the growing body of material on its methodology, it is possible to take a reasonably well informed view of what might happen.

Our own record of prediction on the Independent has been reasonably good. For that June decision, we certainly said that the Bank should raise interest rates, even though we stopped short of predicting it would. We also accurately forecast the breakdown of the MPC's decision, with Dr DeAnne Julius alone voting for a cut. All this from a newspaper that costs just 45p a day.

At the risk of being hoisted on our own petard, here are some more predictions. At last week's meeting, the MPC was divided down the mid-

dle on whether to raise rates or leave them unchanged, with Eddie George being forced to use his casting vote. And after yesterday's earnings figures, there's a strong possibility of the MPC going higher at next month's meeting.

Activism in the GPG style

SIR RON BRIERLEY, the veteran New Zealand investor, is becoming increasingly active in the UK market again through his investment vehicle Guinness Peat Group. Guinness Peat styles itself as a bit of a shareholder activist. Certainly it has been agitating vigorously of late.

Sir Ron's £42m bid for Bluebird Toys, in which GPG had a 22 per cent stake, pushed out a higher offer from Mattel earlier this year. His demerger proposals at Staveley, the 100 year old engineering business, were yesterday more or less agreed by the board. Next week he goes into battle with Young & Co, the under-performing South London brewery, over its out-dated capital structure. Sir Ron's exploits beg the question - are corporate activists a

good thing? The last group we had regularly taking this sort of approach was UK Active Value, the fund run by Brian Myerson and Julian Tregler. Their targets included the jewellery group Signet and the medical group Scholl, but the once dynamic duo have gone rather quiet recently.

Sir Ron's most recent targets certainly look in need of a shake up. Staveley's shares are close to their five year low after a dreadful year in which even its cash cow British Salt business took a hit. With Young & Co, we are looking at one of a dwindling band of companies that persists with a two tier voting structure. John Young, the company's chairman, dismisses GPG's plans as "utterly self serving" which is a bit rich given his own self-serving refusal to enfranchise the non-voting shares.

Corporate activists play a useful part in shaking up under-performing businesses where our typically management supporting institutional investors are too shy to speak up. They are obviously in it for what they can get, but if they increase shareholder value for others in the process too, where's the harm in it?

IN BRIEF

NatWest asked for profit-share

Gleacher, the US corporate advisory arm of National Westminster Bank, is negotiating a generous profit sharing arrangement with its parent company. Gleacher wants NatWest Group to agree to the same type of arrangement with the US corporate advisory business that it has with Hawkpoint, its UK corporate advisory business. Hawkpoint Partners, run by Alton Iriby and George Magan, retains 50 per cent of all its profits.

1,000 to strike

Nearly 1,000 workers at United Utilities Norweb have voted for an indefinite work-to-rule and a one-hour strike over the alleged preferential treatment of employees on personal contracts. Union members operating under a collective agreement will receive a 3.5 per cent pay increase, but those on individual contracts will also enjoy up to 7.5 per cent in bonus and private medical insurance.

The stoppage will coincide with the United Utilities annual general meeting on 24 July. Dave Marsh, regional officer for the Amalgamated Engineering & Electrical Union, said the company was operating a policy of "industrial apartheid". A company spokeswoman said, however, that the additional benefits enjoyed by those on personal contracts had been offered to union members covered by collective bargaining, but they had been rejected.

Ads for casinos

British casino owners welcomed a government decision yesterday to allow casinos to use limited advertising and relax membership rules. Stakis said: "The industry has been working hard to make the government understand that we are outmoded by legislation." George Howarth, Junior Home Office minister, said the government proposed to increase the number of slot machines in a casino from six to 10, and to raise the maximum jackpot prize to £1,000 from £250. Maximum prizes on most pub and club slot machines will rise to £15 from £10.

Bank rating row

Dresdner Bank disputed Fitch IBCA's reasons for cutting the bank's long-term rating to AA from AA+ yesterday, saying it remains highly profitable and plans to expand in Europe. Fitch IBCA said it lowered Dresdner's rating as the bank's ranking in Germany slipped from second to third due to the merger of rivals Gypo-Bank and Vereinsbank. Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the investment banking arm, also lagged its peers. A spokesman for Dresdner said: "There can be no talk of a weak position in Europe. We have built up our position in Italy, Scandinavia and Spain and we will build up business in remaining areas where we have no presence."

Foreign projects rise, but jobs fall

News Analysis: Inward investment continues to surge under Labour, but a shift to hi-tech industries has cut the growth in employment

THE JOBS bonanza generated by Britain's position as the most attractive location in Europe for inward investors may be coming to an end.

Official figures released yesterday show that although the number of foreign investment projects reached a record last year, there was also a sharp drop in the number of new jobs created.

The Invest in Britain Bureau recorded 618 projects in 1997/98 - a 28 per cent increase on the previous year - creating or safeguarding more than 124,000 jobs. Of those, 46,000 were new jobs.

However, the number of jobs attributed to foreign investors setting up in the UK for the first time declined from 24,000 to a little over 16,000. Grants paid to inward investors in the shape of Regional Selective Assistance rose from £104m in 1996/97 to £142m last year.

Department of Trade and Industry officials attributed the decline in job creation to the shift towards more high-technology investment in sectors such as electronics, communications and pharmaceuticals.

"The trend we are seeing, not just in the UK but the whole of North-west Europe, is that inward investments are being concentrated in areas where the products are high value but the level of employment is lower," said one official. "Investors who are looking for cheap labour to fill low level jobs in low-technology ventures are moving increasingly to southern and eastern Europe."

However, Britain does not look in imminent danger of losing its top-ranking position in the inward investment table of the European league. The UK accounts for 30 per cent of all foreign direct investment in Europe, including 40 per cent of all American and Japanese investment and half of all Korean investment.

According to the latest United Nations figures, the UK is

BY MICHAEL HARRISON

second only to the US as a magnet for inward investment, accounting for \$345bn (£212bn) of all foreign direct investment - 11 per cent of the world total.

Foreign investors have created or safeguarded 573,000 jobs in the UK in the last six years and now account for one in six manufacturing jobs, one-third of all manufacturing capital expenditure and a quarter of all output. The UK is home to more inward investment than Germany and France put together.

If the bubble is about to burst, there are as yet few signs of it. The UK appears to have shrugged off the drag factors of a strong pound and the Asian economic downturn. When it comes to choosing a location in Europe, the Government's commitment in principle to joining the single European currency seems to have been a more persuasive consideration than the short-term pain of a high sterling exchange rate.

Officials also point to the picture of stability Britain portrays to overseas investors. As one inward investment executive said: "They like the fact that the environment here is pro-business and our labour markets are deregulated and flexible. Nor do we have those terrible bureaucratic blockages that you have in Europe."

It had been feared that decisions by South Korean companies LG and Hyundai to put electronics projects in South Wales and Scotland on hold was the start of an investment strike by companies caught up in the Asian financial meltdown.

But Andrew Fraser, chief executive of the Invest in Britain Bureau, says: "All our evidence shows that the level of activity and number of visits from Asia is holding up very strongly compared to previous years. I was in Japan recently, and I sense that at a time of tur-



Japan's car makers, such as Honda at Swindon (above), were first: now telecoms, electronics and drugs top the league

Richard Wintle

HOW BRITAIN DRAWS IN FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Top ten recipients of foreign direct investment, 1996		Top ten inward investors, 1997-8	
Country	US\$ billion	Country	No. of jobs created/safeguarded
USA	644.7	USA	58,297
UK	10.66	Japan	58,425
Germany	5.29	Germany	56,925
China	5.23	France	29,948
France	5.21	Canada	21,518
Canada	3.99	Netherlands	19,487
Australia	3.83	Switzerland	17,593
Netherlands	3.67	Sweden	11,132
Others	3.35	Taiwan	10,209
Spain	3.25	Denmark	8,827
		Others	66,12,648
		Total	618,124,622

moil in Asia, the strength, size and stability of Europe's markets is actually very appealing to those investors.

While Britain remains hugely popular with foreign investors, both the method and the type of investment is changing. Nissan, Toyota and Honda led the charge of Japanese car

companies setting up on greenfield sites in the 1980s. The likes of Samsung of Korea and Siemens of Germany have carried the baton on into the 1990s with major investments in electronics and semi-conductor plants.

But the emphasis now is less on setting up at greenfield

sites and more on straightforward takeovers. According to the official definition, a foreign investment can take the form of a new project, the expansion of an existing site, a joint venture or an acquisition. In 1996, only 69 of the 483 projects identified by the IBB were acquisitions. Last year that figure

expanded to 130 out of the 618 projects notified.

Britain is also reaching what some observers believe is "saturation point" with virtually every big name in business now represented in the country. The result has been that much more inward investment now takes the shape of expansion at existing sites. Nearly half of the 618 investments in the UK last year were expansions, and 60 per cent of the 124,000 associated jobs were ones that were safeguarded rather than created.

Nevertheless, the stock of foreign direct investment continues to grow strongly. According to the Office of National Statistics, it rose by £16bn in 1996/97 and by £25bn in 1997/98. The total up to April of this year stands at £172bn.

Outward investment is even healthier. Last year British

firms invested £32.4bn abroad, taking the total stock of UK overseas direct investment to £238bn.

The Labour government has understandably seized on the inward investment figures, portraying them as an international seal of approval for the policies it has pursued since coming to power in May last year. Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, said: "When we took office, some said that inward investment to the UK would dry up as foreign companies feared a Labour government. How wrong they were."

The challenge will be to maintain the momentum in the face of a strong pound, the hiatus in investment from the Far East and growing competition from Britain's competitors elsewhere in Europe.

BT lifts shareholder hopes of £4bn payout

BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS yesterday regained shareholder enthusiasm to buy back up to 10 per cent of its shares, boosting hopes that it might return up to £4bn in cash to shareholders, Bloomberg reports.

BT's shares rose 14p to 817p. They rose as high as 839.5p after BT chairman Sir Iain Vallance confirmed that the company is considering a buy-back or a special dividend.

BT said it would like to give shareholders the £7bn in cash it expects to receive from WorldCom Inc. for its 20 per cent stake in MCI Communications Corp.

BT lost its authorisation to

buy back shares after its plans to buy MCI were terminated last year. There is still a chance the company could choose to spend its money another way, an analyst said.

"They have applied for the right and they have cash, but does a share buy-back make sense? It is debatable at this level whether it makes sense," said Mark Lambert, at Merrill Lynch.

"I wouldn't rule it out, but I wouldn't bank on it." BT's bid for MCI, the No. 2 long-distance telephone company, was trumped by WorldCom, the No. 4 long-distance U.S. telephone company.

WorldCom expects to win

final regulatory approval to buy MCI, the No. 2 long-distance U.S. telephone company, this summer, conditional on the sale of MCI's entire Internet business.

It is expected to announce the sale for up to \$2bn to Cable & Wireless Plc in the next few days.

BT said it is still talking to companies about establishing a presence in the US, the home of 40 per cent of the world's multinational companies, to replace its foiled plan to buy MCI. It declined to comment on speculation it is in talks about creating an alliance with AT&T Corp., the No.1 US long-distance phone company.

Insurers' float is held up by political distrust in Canada

SUN LIFE of Canada and Canada Life are facing indefinite delays in their plans to float on the Toronto stock market because of mounting political opposition in Canada.

The news will come as a blow to more than 350,000 British policyholders who are hoping for windfalls, worth more than £2,000 each, stemming from the flotations, which were originally planned for early 1999.

In the teeth of mounting distrust of insurers, the Canadian government has launched full public hearings and a "shareholder task force" to investigate the flotations.

The public hearings will delay crucial rules on demut-

ualisation, together with legislative changes and guidelines which must be passed before the life insurers can begin work on flotation.

These have now been put on ice pending the outcome of the public hearings that are expected to take at least a year to complete. The flotations are now unlikely until 2000.

Industry observers in Canada are speculating that Sun Life of Canada, already dogged by a bill for pension mis-selling running into hundreds of millions of pounds, may be forced to call off its flotation altogether.

In Canada, four mutual life

insurers - Sun Life of Canada, Canada Life, Manulife and Mutual Life - are planning to demutualise when the government gives them the go-ahead.

Sun Life of Canada has 600,000 policyholders in the UK, 250,000 of whom are expecting windfalls of more than £2,000 each. Canada Life has 750,000 policyholders in the UK, 100,000 of whom expect windfalls of £2,200 each.

Policyholders in Canada are lobbying the government to block the plans. Public distrust has been fuelled by a much-publicised scandal in North America over the sale of so-called "vanishing premium policies" in the last 10 years.

Vanishing premium policies held out the prospect of premiums shrinking to nothing as investments grew and earned enough interest to pay for the life cover. But they were sold on optimistic projections of high investment returns and low premiums - a scenario which collapsed because of economic conditions.

The scandal has affected 400,000 policyholders in Canada and has recently resulted in big payouts by life insurers in settlement of policyholders' claims. In one recent settlement, policyholders were offered £65m.

Sun Life of Canada did not respond yesterday to inquiries.

THE INDEPENDENT
Thursday 16 July 1998

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Pressac raises £57m for expansion

BY CLIFFORD GERMAN

PRESSAC, THE specialists in electrical engineering, will become a worldwide market leader in manufacturing and supplying relays and relay modules to the automotive industry, the chief executive Geoff White said yesterday.

Pressac has just raised £57.1m net of expenses through a rights issue to fund the acquisition of G Cartier Industrie, a privately-owned French-based company, for £60.3m in cash and £2.8m in shares.

The acquisition will initially increase Pressac's market capital by around 30 per cent. Cartier's president, M. Gilles Benhamou, who has built up the business over the past 12 years through a combination of acquisitions and organic growth, now controls around 15 per cent of the company.

He is taking 1.253m Pressac shares in part payment for his stake, and will stay on for at least a further 12 months, retaining operational responsibility for the company.

The remaining shares in Cartier are owned by a number of French-based venture capital companies which are taking cash for their holdings.

Cartier manufactures relays and electronic printed circuit board assemblies, and valves for diesel engines, mainly for the French car market. This fits well with Pressac's existing Italian car business.

Cartier, which employs 1,900 people at factories in France, Germany, Tunisia, Morocco and Argentina, supplies the major

French vehicle manufacturers including Peugeot Citroen and Renault, and nearly 90 per cent of annual sales are to the automotive industries.

The top ten business customers accounted for around 73 per cent of sales in 1997.

Group turnover increased by 18 per cent to £166.7m (£157m), maintaining the steadily rising trend over recent years, and operating profits doubled to £16.5m (£8.5m) after a setback in 1996 attributed to reorganisation costs.

Just over 10 per cent of the purchase price will be held in an escrow account to meet any warranty claims, and will be released over a period of almost four years to February 2003, Pressac said yesterday.

Pressac shareholders will be offered two new shares at 180p for every three existing shares. The acquisition and the rights issue are subject to an EGM to be held on 31 July.

Yesterday the existing shares fell 21p to 260p, but the enlarged market capital will rise from £140m to £216m. Group profits for the year to 31 July are forecast to rise by 37 per cent to not less than £13.8m, in spite of the impact of the strike at General Motors in the United States.

The worldwide market for electronic equipment in new cars is set to grow from \$37bn in 1995 to \$84bn in 2005, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. With manufacturing plants on four continents, the enlarged Pressac group is well-positioned to take advantage of this.



Monsanto will extend its agricultural seed products through the £320m acquisition of a Unilever crop-breeding section. The sale will include Unilever's Plant Breeding International Cambridge

Monsanto buys Unilever crop breeder

MONSANTO AGREED yesterday to buy the crop-breeding unit of Anglo-Dutch Unilever, the world's second-largest consumer-products maker, for £320m cash, to extend its range of agricultural seed products.

Unilever said it expected to complete the sale of Plant Breeding International Cambridge today, and said the sale included PBIC's units in Scotland, France and its German affiliate, PBI Saatgut. The unit, which Unilever bought for £66m from the UK government in 1987, has annual sales of £16m.

PBIC gives Monsanto a

foothold in the huge potential market for hybrid wheat in Britain and is the latest of a series of acquisitions that have transformed Monsanto from a chemicals producer into one of the world's leading agricultural biotechnology companies.

"We have a very small position in wheat and this is a big step for us to get into that area in Britain," Monsanto's co-president of agriculture Hugh Grant said.

Monsanto has sold hybrid wheat to French farmers for the past four years under three brand names: Cabestan, Domino and Cockpit.

French farmers using the products have seen a 12 per cent improvement in yield. That also means the farmer needs less seed than normal wheat, Mr Grant said. But in Britain, no hybrid wheat is in commercial use and Monsanto plans a UK launch of Cockpit in the autumn.

On average, hybrid wheat costs twice as much as normal seed although the return is still double that from planting normal seed because of the higher yield and better quality. In France, prices range from 780 francs (£78.80) to 1,040 francs per hectare.

As well as a distribution system in Britain, the acquisition of PBI brings with it research and development skills that will take Monsanto into the biotechnology field in Europe.

"It's a very good price, but in line with expectations," said Iain Wilson, an analyst at Rabo Securities in Amsterdam, who rates Unilever shares a "hold".

Shares of Unilever, the UK-based parent of Unilever, fell 3p to 673p, while Dutch-based Unilever NV rose 1.7 guilders to 162.6 in Amsterdam.

Monsanto agreed in May to merge with American Home Products Corp Unilever, and

plans to focus on consumer goods and build its food, home and personal care products.

Last month Monsanto agreed to buy Cargill's international seed business for \$1.4bn, while the previous month it agreed to pay a combined \$4.1 billion for Dekalb Genetics Corp, a corn-seed producer, and cotton-seed producer Delta & Pine Land. Its acquisitions have turned Monsanto into a major producer of genetically enhanced crops that are resistant to herbicides and insects.

The move is expected to put further pressure on rivals.

Staveley agrees changes to fend off GPG

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

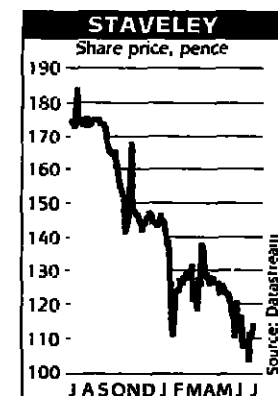
STAVELEY INDUSTRIES, the loss-making engineering and minerals group, attempted to fend off an assault by its 13 per cent shareholder Guinness Peat Group yesterday by coming up with plans to cut costs and return funds to shareholders.

The board has taken up most of Guinness Peat's suggestions for changes, but the key difference lies in plans for the core salt business, which provides Staveley with most of its cash.

GPG had wanted the division to be spun off immediately. But Staveley management, led by the new chief executive, Chris Woodward, wants to delay a spin-off for a year in order to give the management time to improve the other engineering services businesses which it says are not yet strong enough to be demerged into a separate company.

Although both sides have sent circulars to shareholders outlining their plans, it seems the board has done enough to defuse a potential battle. Blake Nixon, head of GPG in Britain, said: "We are fairly encouraged that in principle they have accepted all of our proposals. The only difference seems to be one of timing."

Staveley is the latest company to be shaken up by GPG, which is chaired by the veter-



Morgan Stanley to enter savings market

BY ANDREW VERITY

MORGAN STANLEY Dean Witter, the US investment banking giant, will today launch an assault on the UK retail investment market in a bid to step up its presence in Europe.

The bank, which manages assets worth over £200bn, will for the first time UK-based retail investments to individual customers through insurance brokers and financial advisers.

Morgan Stanley is expected to offer the full range of investment products, including unit trusts, investment trusts and open-ended investment companies.

It will be particularly interested in taking a big chunk of the market in Individual Savings Accounts, the replacement for TESSAs and PEPs which is due in April.

The entry of Morgan Stanley to the individual savings market will pose a serious threat to the market share of UK-based fund managers such as Gartmore, Schroders, M&G and Perpetual.

Peter Jeffreys, head of Standard & Poor's fund research, said the bank was rated 8th out of 255: "On the institutional side, their record is incredible. They are great bottom-up stockpickers - very carefully controlled."

The bank has already established a presence in the UK's institutional savings market and has successfully managed money for pension funds and insurance companies. Further details of its plans will be unveiled today.

The decision of the bank to offer retail investments in the UK underlines the growing keenness of American investment managers to establish a presence in Europe.

Unlike Merrill Lynch, which in November bought Mercury Asset Management for £3.1bn, Morgan Stanley is expanding organically. This follows the success of its rival investment manager, Fidelity, in selling unit trusts and PEPs.



Barry Warwick (centre) of OEPC at The Royal Oak in Cambridgeshire, with directors Paul (left) and Stuart Simpson

Pubs group swells its estate

OLD ENGLISH Pub Company, which raised £30.5m from a rights issue earlier this month (although more than half of the stock was left with the underwriters), yesterday paid £44.4m to finance the acquisition of 34 coaching inns and six pub/restaurants, mainly in the South and the Midlands.

OEPC is paying £42.4m in cash and £2m in shares.

The properties have been individually selected - 23 of them from particular vendors, seven from Forte Heritage Hotels and 10 coaching inns from the

BY CLIFFORD GERMAN

Regal Hotel group, according to chief executive Barry Warwick. The purchase prices had been individually negotiated and ranged from 125 per cent to almost double the annual turnover.

The 40 properties have a combined turnover of £26.6m and an average turnover of £664,000 per unit. A further £1.1m will be spent on bringing the new outlets into the standard OEPC format. It will then take an estimated six months

to raise sales to meet OEPC's current annual sales growth.

The acquisition will bring OEPC's portfolio to 160 properties, including 101 coaching inns and 59 pub restaurants, and increase the stock of letting bedrooms from 1,170 to 1,953.

In the first three months of the current year OEPC's sales were 78 per cent higher than at the same stage last year, and like-for-like growth was 5.1 per cent, in spite of the wet weather and the World Cup.

The shares rose 6.5p to 307.5p.

BG to take control of Argentine gas supplier

THE BRITISH gas supply and exploration group BG Plc said yesterday that it is to take control of a UK-Argentine gas holding company Gas Argentina (GASA) and its indirectly held gas distribution operation Metrogas SA.

BG is to buy a 25 per cent stake in GASA from the Argentine energy and industrial holding company Perez Companac for \$75m (£46m), increasing its holding to 68 per cent.

BG's ultimate stake in Metrogas will depend on whether other GASA shareholders exercise certain rights, but it will have at least 54.67 per cent of the company through GASA, which owns 70 per cent, and through its own direct 3.5 per cent holding.

Metrogas is key to BG's strategy in South America as

the largest buyer of gas and gas transport capacity and the largest holder of interruptible gas transport capacity in the Southern Cone, a region which groups Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and southern Brazil.

With the investment, BG is expanding its involvement in the gas pipeline system that will deliver Argentine gas to Uruguay, and eventually to the fast-growing power generation and distribution markets in southern Brazil.

In June, BG signed a construction and operation project with the Uruguayan government and other partners for a 215km \$120m natural gas pipeline that will link Buenos Aires with Montevideo.

GASA/Metrogas made an operating profit of \$87m in 1997 on sales of \$628m. The

group had consolidated debt of \$454m at the end of that year.

"We see Metrogas as a sound investment in its own right, as well as providing a base for BG's involvement in developing the gas pipeline system, which will deliver Argentine gas to Uruguay and, in time, on to the fast-growing power generation and distribution markets in southern Brazil," Stephen Brandon, BG's executive director with responsibility for international downstream operations, said.

BG was created last year from the division of British Gas. Centrica Plc now distributes gas in the United Kingdom, while BG operates at all levels in the gas industry internationally.

British Gas shares closed up 6p at 375p.

COMPANY RESULTS						
Name	Turnover (£)	Pre-tax (£)	EPS	Dividend	Pay day	Ex-Dividend
Bullough (I)	108.0m (113.8m)	8.0m (4.6m)	4.6p (4.7p)	1.25p (1.25p)	04.09.98	03.08.98
First Technology (F)	54.27m (50.48m)	13.6m (9.2m)	19.5p (12.7p)	5.0p (3.8p)	14.10.98	07.09.98
Stockbourne (S)	3.92m (5.62m)	0.13m (0.49m)	0.07p (0.27p)	-	-	-
Weather Action (A)	253.1m (145.6m)	0.38m (-0.058m)	-5.23p (-1.39p)	-	-	-

(F) - First; (I) - Interim; (S) - Share; (A) - EPS is pre-tax; * Dividend to be paid as a FID

Falling returns threaten Lloyd's financial strength

BY ANDREW VERITY

STANDARD & POOR'S, the credit rating agency, yesterday warned that the financial strength of Lloyd's of London will be weakened if returns at the insurance market carry on shrinking.

The agency said falling returns on capital at Lloyd's threatened its A-plus credit rating - a key factor in the market's ability to attract new customers.

In its annual report on Lloyd's, S&P said: "If returns on capital continue to decline significantly, this could put pressure on the rating level, as the attractiveness of Lloyd's to current and prospective members would be adversely affected."

S&P said Lloyd's would this year keep its single-A-plus rating, pointing to a strong capital base, strong regulation and financial flexibility.

But the agency hedged its rating. It said earnings had been weakened by the cost of the Lloyd's reconstruction programme, which rescued it from disastrous losses incurred between 1988 and 1992.

"Given that Lloyd's is well capitalised and is expected to be writing at modest levels of capacity, returns will be relatively modest compared to its peers," S&P said.

After peaking in 1995 at 18 per cent, returns at Lloyd's have since fallen consistently to 12.8 per cent in 1996 and 8 per cent last year.

Corporate members of Lloyd's have repeatedly warned that syndicates will struggle to make a profit at all on insurance underwritten in 1998.

However, S&P's report plays this down, claiming profitability in 1998 will be "lower but still acceptable".

The report will feed the suspicion of some names that corporate members are seeking to buy them out of the market "on the cheap" by talking down the value of their holdings.



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Email: a.powell@t2.mbs.ac.uk WWW: http://www.mbs.ac.uk

MANCHESTER BUSINESS SCHOOL

[illegible]

Low Stock										Low Stock									
Price	Chg	High	Low	Vol	Open	High	Low	Vol	Open	Price	Chg	High	Low	Vol	Open	High	Low	Vol	Open
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33	33	16-18								33	33	16-18							
34	34	18-20								34	34	18-20							
35	35	20-22								35	35	20-22							
36	36	22-24								36	36	22-24							
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39	39	28-30								39	39	28-30							
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43	43	36-38								43	43	36-38							
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59	59	68-70								59	59	68-70							
60	60	70-72								60	60	70-72							
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PROPERTY										PROPERTY										
Price	Chg	High	Low	Vol	Open	High	Low	Vol	Open	Price	Chg	High	Low	Vol	Open	High	Low	Vol	Open	
17	17	Allied Inc	91	0.0	8.8	8.5	1957	100	0.0	21.1	20.7	1957	100	0.0	21.1	20.7	1957	100	0.0	
18	18	Amalgamated	165	0.5	3.5	11.7	165	0.5	3.5	11.7	165	0.5	3.5	11.7	165	0.5	3.5	11.7	165	0.5
19	19	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
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29	29	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
30	30	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
31	31	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
32	32	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
33	33	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
34	34	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
35	35	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
36	36	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
37	37	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
38	38	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
39	39	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
40	40	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
41	41	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
42	42	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
43	43	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
44	44	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
45	45	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
46	46	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
47	47	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
48	48	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
49	49	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
50	50	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
51	51	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
52	52	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
53	53	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
54	54	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
55	55	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
56	56	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
57	57	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
58	58	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
59	59	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
60	60	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
61	61	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
62	62	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
63	63	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
64	64	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0
65	65	Amalgamated	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	244	0.0	0.0	0.0	24	

source: **Bloomberg**
www.bloomberg.com

SHARE PRICE DATA

Prices are in sterling except where stated. Price reflects the official closing mid price. Sector movements are based on the FTSE-350. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P-E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional items. Other details: E = Rights, A = dividend; E-A = Ex-All, S = Suspended, P = Penny Paid, np = Nil Paid. - AMI.

Prices are Bloomberg Sources

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1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

M&S left behind by Footsie's charge

AS FOOTSIE surged to a record high the shares of Marks & Spencer, the retailing aristocrat, bumped along near their 12-month low.

They fell by 3p (after 11.5p) to 544p as the stock market fretted about today's trading statement. There are fears that chairman Sir Richard Greenbury will not have a particularly happy tale to relate.

Many shopkeepers have felt the pinch this year as consumer demand has wilted, and Marks is thought to have endured the chill wind of slackening sales with stores going round of customer returns running at a high rate. Already some analysts' forecasts have been pulled back. Last week CSFB trimmed this year's estimate from £1.09bn to £1.06bn.

Many still expect Sir Richard to report higher sales. BT Alex Brown is looking for 5 per cent growth, while Salomon Smith Barney is shooting for an 8 per cent gain.

Nervousness over Marks was, however, a side issue. Shares, particularly blue chips, again romped ahead, with Footsie closing up 51.3 points at 6,151.5 peak. At one time it was up 79.6 points. Still, in two

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

tic days the index has risen by 193.3 points.

The charge was tempered a little by figures showing a sharp increase in average earnings which, together with the Government's spending plans, reinforced nervousness about the economy. The spectre of higher interest rates could, it is felt, quickly return to haunt the market.

Supporting shares were a touch weaker. The mid cap index rose 39.6 to 5,697.7 and the small cap 4.8 points to 2,581.0.

MCI, the US telecoms group, in-

directly plugged into the Footsie action. The market is convinced that Cable & Wireless, up 33p to 842p, is about to clinch the acquisition of MCI's Internet business, a deal needed for its merger with WorldCom to receive full regulatory clearance.

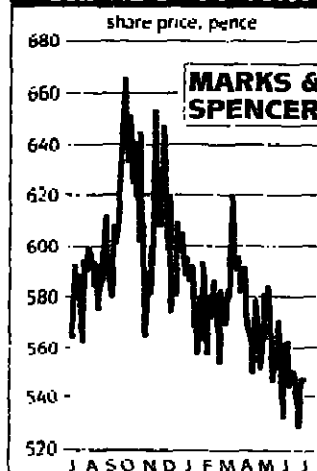
And BT, up 14p (after 38p) to 817p, said it may return the profits from its collapsed takeover of MCI to shareholders through a share buyback or special dividend. The telecoms group is due to receive \$7bn (£4.3bn) from the sale of its 20 per cent stake in MCI.

Vodafone, up 28.5p to 868.5p, kept the telecom lines buzzing by revealing its intention to float its Australian operation. And, for the umpteenth time, Colt Telecom hit a new high, jumping 252.5p to 3,262.5p.

Elsewhere Compass, the contract caterer, was at one time up 65.5p and closed 35.5p harder at 650p. British Energy continued to reflect the Morgan Stanley support, up 30p to 587p, and among engineers Siebe edged ahead 38p to 1,180p.

Banks again anticipated their

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



dividend season, which starts later this month. The usual suspicion of corporate action is also in the air. Halifax ended 39p higher at 834p and Bank of Scotland 22.5p to 753p.

500p to a still lowly 530p. Morgan Stanley and ABN Amro are also hesitant, but Henderson Crosthwaite remains positive.

Safeway convenience stores' link with British Petroleum left the supermarket shares off 5p to 384.5p. BP added 8.5p to 859.5p.

Seton Scholl, meeting analysts, firmed 40p to 782.5p and Smith & Nephew, for long out of favour, added 4.5p 155p: last year the shares were 191.75p.

Photo-Me International clicked 38.5p higher to 372.5p after its driving licence boost, but Car Group, the second-hand car dealer, remained in reverse, off 17.5p to 37p: the shares were 221.5p last year. The company has promised a detailed statement next week - the delay is worrying the market.

Lorjen, the recruitment group, crashed 111p to 601.5p despite reassuring noises. There is still disappointment with Tuesday's interim figures, which although roughly in line with expectations, left the shares down 69p.

Next, the ruffled retailer, climbed 11p to 504p as Tiger Management, a "bottom fishing" US investment

group, lifted its stake to 10.6 per cent, buying a further 10.5 million shares. The fund, where Baroness Thatcher is a consultant, has been a persistent buyer of Next shares in recent weeks. Its usual objective is to double its money in a few years. Next shares were at 835p earlier this year; they fell to 475p after a profit warning. A 6,400-share purchase at 493p by finance director David Keens also helped sentiment.

Dragon Oil held at 34.5p. The shares have been in steady retreat since topping 100p in September: the Asian crisis has done much of the damage. Former chairman Arif Panigoro has 46 per cent of the capital and would like to sell.

Dana Petroleum fell 0.5p to 14.5p, a low. There have been hopes of a deal in Ghana, but with the shares down from 25p investors are clearly losing patience.

Cresco International, reflecting a profits warning, fell 22.5p to 126.6p. The Israeli group has interests in a range of companies.

SEAQ VOLUME: 863.5 million
SEAQ TRADES: 76,687
GILTS INDEX: 104.86 -0.39

CHANGES AT Galaxy Media: chairman Christopher Moran has quit and his 28.8 per cent stake placed by stockbroker Townsley at 76p a share against 103.5p, down 5.5p, in the market.

The broker is also raising £180,000 by placing shares at 98.5p. Galaxy, which takes in Mike Mansfield Television, a production company, is taking an option to buy Sports News: the cost of the acquisition could be as much as £2.8m. SN, a producer of sports-related programmes, was founded by Graham Gutteridge, who becomes Galaxy's chief executive.

CAMBRIDGE Mineral Resources held at 9.5p. It has raised £330,000, placing shares at 8.5p. As part of the placing Hanover Continental, a London-based venture capital group, has lifted its stake to 3.2 per cent. CMR's activities include hunting for diamonds and sapphires in Co Donegal in the Irish Republic.

First Technology is back in the fast lane

OVER THE past seven years the performance of First Technology, the car safety equipment specialist, has been remarkably similar to one of its crash test dummies.

After a near-fatal accident in 1991 the company has managed to piece itself together and get back in the fast lane. The rehabilitation continued yesterday when First Technology reported a 47 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £13.6m, its seventh successive increase. This pushed the stock 7.5p higher to 397.5p.

Most of this success is due to a string of best-selling products which came on to the market just when safety started to become a key issue for car manufacturers. Take First Technology's best-known piece of wizardry, a device that switches off the fuel supply to the engine when the car is involved in an accident. This is now fitted on one in three cars made in the world and is expected to grow rapidly over the next few years.

Sales of this and other similar products rose nearly 27 per cent during the year, and steady growth is forecast for the near future as new products come on stream and more manufacturers make safety devices standard features.

The success of its equipment-making division has helped offset a dire year in First Technology's crash test dummies division. Sales there fell by 17 per cent, hit by a slump in Asian demand and by the delay of US legislation to allow testing with smaller dummies. However, the law, which would give the go-ahead to crash tests using dummies the size of a small child or a woman, is expected to be approved later this year, opening up a major new market in which First Technology will have a near-monopoly.

Overall, the long-term prospects look rather promising. On analysts' forecasts of £14m for 1998, the shares trade on a forward multiple of 20. Not cheap but given the outlook still good value.

INVESTMENT

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FIRST TECHNOLOGY GROUP: AT A GLANCE

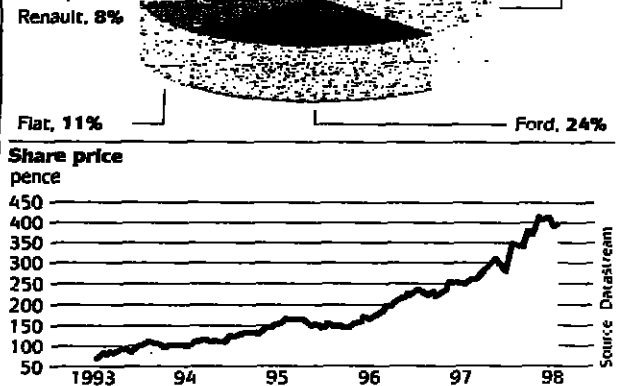
Market value: £190.2, share price: 397.5p (+7.5p)

Trading record	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Turnover (£m)	34.0	32.9	38.8	50.5	51.9
Pre-tax profits (£m)	4.1	6.3	7.3	9.2	13.6
Earnings per share (p)	5.7	8.8	10.0	12.7	16.7
Dividends per share (p)	1.2	2.3	2.7	3.6	5.0

Group sales by customer

1998

PSA, 4%	Others, 29%	GM, 24%
Renault, 8%		
Flat, 11%		
		Ford, 24%



Source: Datastream

Bullough has £30m to spend

BULLOUGH, the industrial engineering group, can spend up to £30m on acquisitions to continue the reconstruction programme begun three years ago, according to Sir Michael Pickard, the group's chairman.

It has already radically altered the balance of the business, with smaller and less profitable businesses gradually being sold in favour of bigger businesses with better margins.

The loss-making General Refrigeration division was sold last week, and the emphasis is increasingly on specialised engineering. Bullough is a serious player, supplying bespoke electric motors for anything from apple-picking machines to trolley jacks and wheelchairs, and more acquisitions in Europe would make good sense. Central heating will remain a core business, but the role of office

furniture which made up nearly half of sales a decade ago is set to shrink, and the remaining refrigeration businesses could well be next to be sold.

In the half year to the end of April, results were dragged down by a £2.2m loss at General Refrigeration and pre-tax profits were actually down by 4 per cent to £2m. But operating profits in ongoing businesses were up by 14 per cent, rising to 17 per cent including last year's acquisitions.

Order books are good and the strength of sterling is not a major factor. Only 13 per cent of all sales are exports.

Losses at General Refrigeration were double most expectations, but operating profits in ongoing businesses were being upgraded yesterday, leaving full-year forecasts unchanged at £22m. The shares were flat at 90.5p, barely seven times this year's forecast earnings. If the final dividend is maintained they will yield 6.4 per cent. Buy.

Photo-Me in prime position

SHORT OF a government initiative to introduce personal identity cards, the Brussels edict that driving licences should include photographs of the holders could not be any better for Photo-Me International.

Already Britain's largest operator of photo booths with around two-thirds of the market, Photo-Me is in prime position to gobble up most of the additional business this new plan will generate.

According to the company's own estimates the additional demand could be 40,000 new sets of photos per month from August, when new drivers have to have the cards, rising to over 500,000 a month by 1999. Photo-Me will not grab all the increase, but it could add 20 per cent to 25 per cent to current volumes.

It is possible that the boom could encourage a rival to cut prices in an attempt to grab more share, but as the market leader Photo-Me has many of the best sites and at £2.50 its prices are hardly expensive.

The impact has been felt in the shares, which have risen from little more than 100p at the end of last year to 372.5p, up another 38.5p, at the close yesterday.

A range of external factors, particularly exchange rates, have affected overseas earnings, but Photo-Me has soldiered on with a policy of investing £20m in research and development. One new development is the Photovision booth which shows users a video clip of their photos from which they can choose a suitable still.

Rating Photo-Me's shares is difficult, with no formal forecasts available ahead of the company's full-year results next month. Greig Middleton's 1998 forecast of £15m puts the shares on a forward p.e. of 30. At these levels it looks like the shares are already well up to pace with events.

IN BRIEF

Capital raises stake in Glades

CAPITAL SHOPPING Centres yesterday lifted its stake in The Glades shopping centre, Bromley, to over 63 per cent. The company said it had entered into a contract to buy 50 per cent of General Accident Life Assurance Ltd's interest in The Glades for £5m, funded from existing facilities.

CSC's interest will raise to 63.52 per cent from 42.05 per cent, with General Accident holding 21.47 per cent and the London Borough of Bromley 15 per cent. Completion will be on 27 July.

Property profit

STOCKBOURNE, the property management and investment group, has reported a profit for the first time in 10 years in the year to the end of March, following the injection of new business and management in May 1996.

A second-half profit of £165,000 more than offset a loss of £126,000 in the first half, leaving a profit of just £39,000 for the year, compared with a loss of £497,000 in the previous year. Further progress is anticipated, although profits on disposals will arise mainly in the second half of the year, the chairman said yesterday.

NMT stock down

SHARES in NMT fell 6p to 52.5p after it announced it had called off talks with the Canadian-based Solar Pharmaceutical. The AIM-listed group, which is developing a hypodermic needle that will minimise needlestick injuries, said it had signed a non-binding letter of intent with Solar in March 1998 but has decided not to proceed with the potential joint venture.

Thorn sales fall

THORN, the rental stores chain which recently agreed a £90m bid with Nomura, told shareholders that sales had fallen 1.6 per cent in the first quarter of its fiscal year, in line with expectations, as the UK's second-largest appliance rental business began the year with fewer rental contracts.

Click too many costs £150,000

ONE CLICK of the mouse too many cost ED&F Man £150,000 last Friday when a trader at the commodities company fell foul of the International Petroleum Exchange's (IPE) electronic trading system.

Both the company and the IPE refused to name the trader, who clicked twice on his mouse instead of once to execute a natural gas futures deal - in the process magnifying the value of the deal 100 times.

The unlucky chap concerned was Nick Williams, 1 can reveal. The glitch was quickly spotted and the company decided to honour the contract with counterparty Carr Futures.

A spokesman for ED & F Man said yesterday that the mistake had been caused by "a technical error of some sort - we're not naming the trader."

The IPE has a turnover of up to £2 billion a day through a mixture of open-outcry, at its base in London's St Katharine's Dock, and electronic trading. The IPE's benchmark Brent crude oil futures contract sets the price of 65 per cent of the world's internationally-traded oil supplies.

A spokeswoman for the IPE confirmed there had been a mix-up on pricing a deal last week, but "we're not allowed to say who the companies are."

She added that if the IPE can establish a "manifest error" then the exchange can cancel the contract, but that they were unable to do so in this instance.

NOT TO be outdone, our French friends over at Matif witnessed an even more spectacular mispricing cock-up yesterday, which could end up costing the traders concerned millions of pounds.

The French launched their own version of a gilts futures contract yesterday morning at 8.30 to rival Life's own British Government bond contract.

However, several traders at Matif had not realised that the maturity of the French contract was different to the Life equivalent.

When the Matif and Life gilt

PEOPLE AND BUSINESS

BY JOHN WILLCOCK



BRIAN DAVIS, chief executive of the embattled Nationwide Building Society, has been receiving some unexpected fan mail.

Not, alas, for Mr Davis's role as defender of the mutual cause against the dark forces of carpetbaggers.

The fact is Mr Davis's two cats, Ferretty and Buster, appeared in an ad when Nationwide launched its pet insurance earlier this year, and have since received letters from admiring feline fanciers.

Cannily, Mr Davis has been getting his kids to answer the mail.

contracts started trading at different prices, they tried to make a turn on the difference by going long in one market and short in the other.

This attempt at "arbitraging" the gilt contract went on for about half an hour until someone pointed out to the traders that the Matif contract maturity was 7½-11 years, compared to Life's 10-15 years.

Horried, the traders then appealed to the authorities to cancel the contracts, and other participants in Matif stopped trading at about 9.30 while the mess was sorted out.

Business resumed at noon, after Matif's ruling committee decided it could not cancel the contracts, as everyone concerned had been sent full details of the new products in good

time. By 5.30pm, 1,270 of the new contracts had been traded, which Matif viewed as "encouraging."

Nevertheless, there will be some sleepless locals trading on Matif today. If the markets move the wrong way, their outstanding positions on the gilt contract could cost them a whole heap of francs. Or as one market insider said last night: "They've probably got themselves completely stuffed."

Quel dommage.

AND SO TO Number 11 for Gordon Brown's drinks party following his magnificent "Spend, Spend, Spend" speech.

The splendid first-floor reception room overlooking Horseguards is in magnificent condition, crammed with every species of Minister and hack. Gordon, his delightful companion Sarah Montagu, husband-and-wife power duo Ed Balls and Yvette Cooper, Geoffrey Robinson, Helen Liddell, Charlie Whelan - all tucking into the champers and canapés as if the word "crony" had never been coined.

Just outside the reception room is the door to the house's private apartments, currently occupied by Tony Blair and his family who moved over from No.10 to take advantage of the Chancellor's gardens.

Popping into the Chancellor's loo, I noticed that the bottle of Harpic loo-cleaner was firmly marked "No. 11" in big black letters. Is this to stop Nicky Gordon's bog cleaner?

WHAT A NOVEL career move for Desmond Hudson, who resigned yesterday as managing director of a life assurance company to take over as managing director of Scottish Media Group's Publishing Division.

Its not often that people make the leap from fogging insurance to fogging newspapers like The Herald, The Evening Times and the Voice.

Maria Stafford will replace him at Britannia Life, the Glasgow-based subsidiary of Britannia Building Society, where she is a non-executive director.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATES

Country	Sterling Spot	1 month	3 month	Dollar Spot	1 month	3 month	D-Mark Spot
UK	1.0000			0.6129	0.6151	0.6151	0.3398
Australia	2.6156	2.6156	2.6078	1.6032	1.6035	1.6040	0.8500
Canada	20.722	20.686	20.607	12.682	12.679	12.675	7.040
France	60.635	60.487	60.073	37.145	37.075	36.550	20.621
Germany	16.250	16.207	16.098	1.4648	1.4637	1.4621	0.8243
Italy	11.220	11.189	11.121	1.0963	1.0917	1.087	0.8406
Japan	149.05	148.62	147.71	5.4772	5.4675	5.4486	3.0007
Netherlands	8.997	8.970	8.953	5.4772	5.4675	5.4486	3.0007
Spain	166.34	166.08	165.58	1.8013	1.7980	1.7916	1.0000
Sweden	2.9433	2.9334	2.9125	300.20	301.87	305.20	166.66
Switzerland	496.53	492.68	490.75	7.7500	7.7500	7.7500	4.3024
US	1.5248	1.5248	1.5248	1.9100	1.9100	1.9100	0.7903
	12.479	12.455	12.406	7.6346	7.6346	7.6346	4.2397
	301.36	300.48	298.58	184.38	183.71	182.36	102.36
	6.1291	6.1222	6.1073	3.7510	3.7526	3.7505	2.0824
	2.7688	2.7711	2.7679	1.5945	1.5985	1.5985	0.9407
	3.9564	3.9564	3.9564	1.178	1.178	1.178	0.3963
	249.9	249.29	247.85	152.96	152.40	152.45	84.916
	13.119	13.083	13.004	8.0285	8.0151	7.9984	4.8572
	2.742	2.742	2.742	1.5142	1.5096	1.5005	0.8406
	1.6340			1.0000			0.5552

OTHER SPOT RATES

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.6940	1.0000	Iran	0.6391	0.3650
Brazil	1.8972	1.1611	Pakistan	75.878	46.400
China	13.528	8.2795	Philippines	67.974	41.600
Czech Rep	52.366	32.060	Poland	5.6336	3.4600
Egypt	5.5937	3.4025	Romania	5.9466	3.6405
Hong Kong	381.13	233.2	South Korea	1015.0	621.30
Hungary	356.05	42.600	Taiwan	36.128	1282.00
India	69.688	42.600	Thailand	67.403	34.250
Indonesia	2553.8	1570.0	Turkey	67.403	269300
Kuwait	0.5016	0.3070	UAE	6.0009	3.6725
Nigeria	138.89	85.000			

INTEREST RATES

many	2.50%	US	
ard	4.50%	Prime	
ne	6.50%	Discount	
mark	5.00%	Fed Funds	
		Spain	
		10-yr Repo	
		Sweden	
		Repo(Ave)	

BOND YIELDS			
1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg
5.03	0.03	5.16	0.03
5.84	-0.02	4.01	-0.01
7.16	0.03	5.17	0.02
12.12	0.00	3.94	0.00
6.82	-0.02	4.01	0.01
3.82	0.00	3.93	-0.01
3.32	0.00	4.34	-0.01
4.27	-0.01	0.56	-0.02
3.81	0.00	3.39	0.01
-0.02	-0.01	4.12	-0.01
1.15	0.00	4.25	0.01
1.35	-0.01	2.32	0.00
5.05	0.00	5.66	0.08
5.05	-0.01	5.44	-0.02

BOND YIELDS

Country	3 month	5 yr	10 yr	30 yr
Australia	4.25	0.01	5.03	5.16

SPORT

El Guerrouj upholds an African tradition

AS A child, Hicham El Guerrouj started running to escape being told off by his mother. Today, the man with the face of a child has run all the way into athletics history.

What this 23-year-old Moroccan did in the Stadio Olimpico on Tuesday night took a while to sink in - and not only because the trackside clock was malfunctioning.

When his 1500 metres time was confirmed at 3min 26sec it marked both a world record and the end of an era. More precisely, the end of the Noureddine Morceli era.

The Algerian who dominated the middle distances in the early Nineties, whom no one had thought could be eclipsed this side of the millennium, was surpassed. The upright young Moroccan had taken 1.37sec off the mark Morceli established three years and two days earlier.

Since Jim Ryan of the United States jump-started modern 1500m running in 1967 in reducing Herb Elliott's seven-year-old mark by 2.5sec, no one has taken such a chunk out of the record. Morceli did manage to break the record by

A young Moroccan brought the Morceli era to an end when he destroyed the 1500m world record. By Mike Rowbottom

1.49sec in Nice in 1995, but he was only bettering the time he himself had established.

The chronology of the metric mile record in the last 20 years tells its own story. Britain, in the form of Seb Coe, Steve Ovett and Steve Cram, dominated until 1985, when Said Aouita, El Guerrouj's illustrious mentor and compatriot, began the present period of African domination.

Now the record is back in Moroccan hands, a fact that was marked soon after the race when El Guerrouj's press conference was interrupted by the ringing of his mobile phone. It was a congratulatory call from Nezha Bidouane, the Moroccan who won the women's 400m hurdles title at last year's World Championships.

Guerrouj joyfully acknowledged his achievement as the latest record

holder to come out of Africa. "First it was Aouita's time. Then Morceli's. Now it is Hicham's. We are all Muslims. We are all brothers."

He expressed fraternal feelings also towards the Kenyan pace-makers Noah Ngey and Robert Kibet, whom he referred to as his "leopards", adding: "When I reached 800m in 1:50, and 1000 in 2:18, I knew I could get the record. This climate, the weather, the track and the support - I found the ideal conditions."

El Guerrouj dedicated his victory to King Hassan II, whom he described as: "Our greatest supporter." Under the royal aegis, El Guerrouj receives a monthly grant of 1.5m lire to enable him to train to the fullest extent.

Since he gave up goalkeeping as a 15 year old - he played for a youth

team near his home town of Bekrane - to concentrate on athletics, El Guerrouj has been marked out as an extraordinary talent.

After excelling in school and local competitions, the young son of a Bekrane restaurant owner, one of a family of eight children, was invited to join the national training programme at Aouita's specific request.

There he was trained by Abdel Kader Kada, the former Moroccan 5,000m and 10,000m champion. At 18, El Guerrouj won the 5,000m bronze at the 1992 World Junior Championships and two years later he broke through to world class with a 1500m time of 3min 33.61sec.

A fall at the bell robbed him of the chance to challenge Morceli for the 1996 Olympic 1500m title, something many observers felt he would otherwise have achieved. It was but joy deferred.

Last season he won the world title in Athens - where Morceli was fifth - and the official changing of the guard began. Now he has the metric mile record, Morceli's tradition-



The new 1500m world record holder Hicham El Guerrouj acknowledges his achievement. AFP

al mile mark of 3:44.39 cannot be safe for long.

El Guerrouj's stated aim of achieving a 3:24 for the distance, perhaps this season, appears outrageously ambitious, even in the light of what he achieved in Rome. But if anyone can do it, he can.

While El Guerrouj was confirming his pre-eminence, another established legend of the track was resisting a takeover bid.

After his defeat in Oslo by Britain's young lions, Mark Richardson and Iwan Thomas, Michael Johnson was left with something to prove in Rome. The world and

Olympic 400m champion rose to the challenge, holding off his rivals to win in 44.40.

For Johnson, who has run nearly a full second faster, the time was unremarkable. But he derived comfort from his victory in what was only his third race since returning from injury.

If anyone doubted the motivation of the Texan in a season when there is no global championship, they would have been reassured by his uncharacteristically demonstrative reaction after crossing the line 0.22sec ahead of Richardson. Arms aloft he nodded repeatedly to the ap-

plauding crowd as if to say "That's right, I'm back."

He now promises that at the Goodwill Games starting in New York on Sunday "The real Michael Johnson" will be evident.

For Richardson, who had hoped to break the British record of 44.36, two big performances in six days proved just too much as Johnson showed his class to relegate him to second best in Rome.

The American has lost only two significant 400m races in 10 years, so if there is an emerging El Guerrouj to come bursting through in that event, he has his work cut out.

Police question Festina officials

BY ROBIN NICHOLL

THREE MEMBERS of the Festina team of France were yesterday being questioned by French police at Cholet. The team director Bruno Roussel, the team's doctor Eric Rijkkaert, and an unidentified man went of their own accord to the police headquarters a week after a team masseur, Willy Voet, was arrested for possession of banned substances.

Police also went to the team hotel to search the doctor's room and a truck carrying equipment and baggage. The Tour director, Jean-Marie Leblanc, said that there was no reason to expel the team from the race.

The three can be held for 96 hours without charge, and Miguel Moreno, Festina's No 3 team director, is on his way to join the Tour in case Roussel has to remain with the police. Roussel said through his lawyer that he wanted to give his side of the story as soon as possible after Voet, a 53-year-old Belgian, changed his story. The masseur initially claimed the 400 vials found in his team car at a Customs check on the Franco-Belgian border were for his own use. Now, according to police, he has said he was working "under orders".

A Swiss sports doctor claimed in a French daily paper yesterday that drug taking is widespread in the sport. "I gave up with a team after one year because I realised that they were on drugs, and giving themselves injections," Dr Gerard Gremion said in an interview in Wednesday's *France-Sport*.

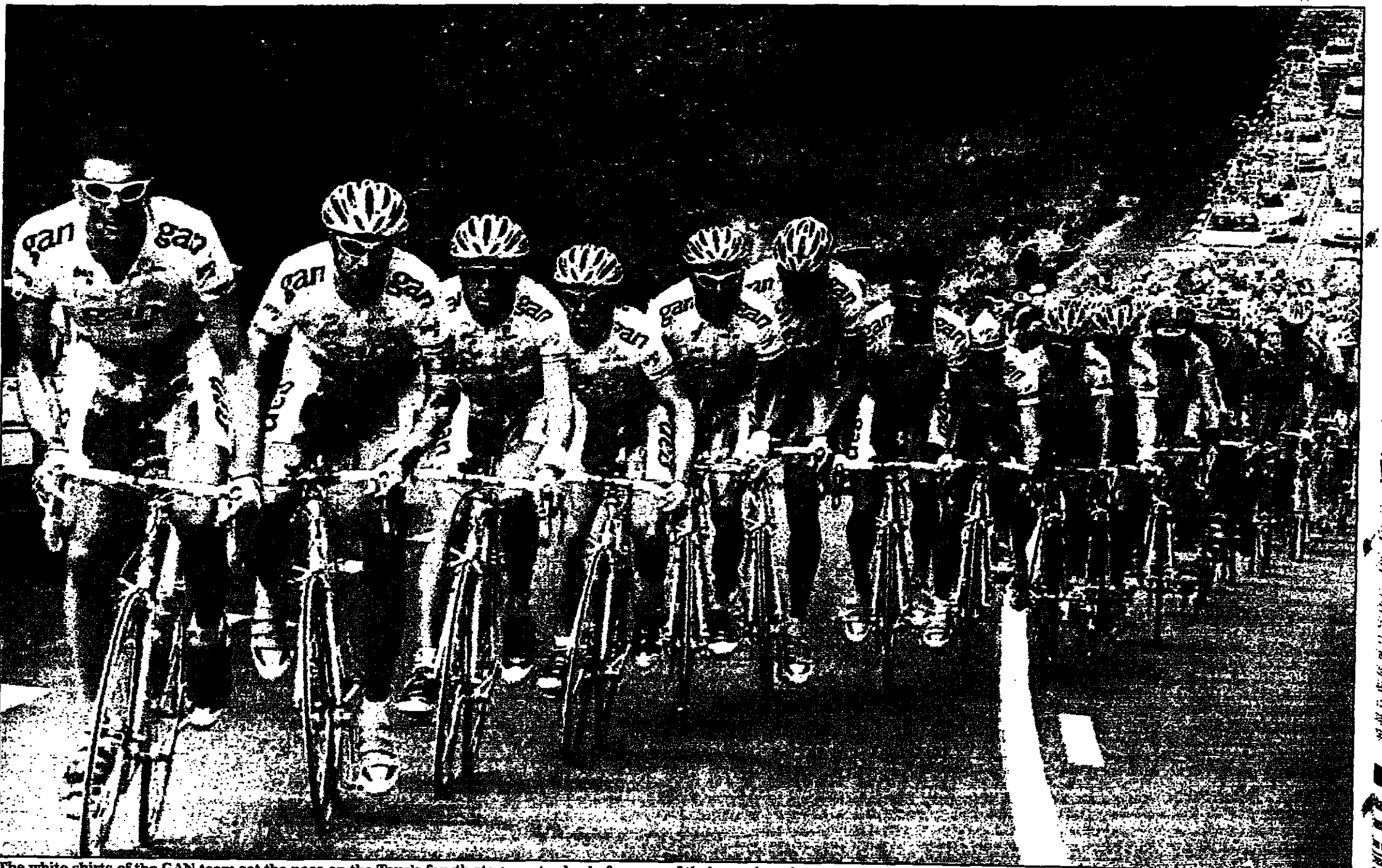
He cited famous names, claiming that taking dope brought about the early death of one Tour rider, and that another, after a particularly successful season, was "like a walking corpse". He also claimed that a former world champion could not have surgery at one stage "because his blood was in no condition for such an operation".

Dr Gerard Porte, the head of the Tour medical team, said: "Doping is the worst thing for sport, but I cannot believe that it is on such a wide scale. We know that the crooks are always one step ahead." In an article in *LEquipe*, the French sports paper, a former team director, Cyrille Guimard, was adamant about the role of sports doctors.

"They are the real team chiefs. The team director is now just a car driver," said the Frenchman who was team manager to several leading riders, notably the five times Tour winner Bernard Hinault. "We are all to blame," Guimard said. "It all started with EPO."

Erythropoietin (EPO) arrived in 1987, but 20 years before that Tom Simpson died after collapsing on Mont Ventoux. From the post-mortem examination it was concluded that amphetamines were a contributory factor to his death.

In June the previous year the introduction of official doping controls in the Tour caused a strike by riders. Simpson's death highlighted the need for testing.



The white shirts of the GAN team set the pace on the Tour's fourth stage yesterday before one of their number, the Australian Stuart O'Grady, went on to claim the yellow jersey. Reuters

O'Grady graduates with honours

BY ROBIN NICHOLL

with the Tour de France

STUART O'GRADY proudly pulled on the yellow jersey of Tour de France leader here in Cholet yesterday, to become only the second Australian in 85 Tours to win the *maillot jaune*. The victory was sweeter still for O'Grady, since his team-mate Chris Boardman had crashed out of the race two days earlier while wearing the famous colours.

Yesterday was a landmark for Australian cycling, which first celebrated in 1981 when Phil Anderson made Tour history. It was O'Grady's second quest for glory, but it was as tenuous as Tuesday's efforts when he was with the leaders but missed the decisive move in the final kilometre.

Then after only 62 of yesterday's 252km from Plouay, he was the virtual leader. A former world track champion, the Australian snatched up two intermediate sprints, worth 12 seconds in deductions from his overall time. The first was enough to put him ahead.

His No 1 place was almost knocked off-line, however, by the ambitious French pair of Jacky Durand and Damien Nazon. Their breakaway for over 100km gained more than three and a half minutes and Durand, 1min 16sec in arrears overnight, was suddenly the Tour leader.

O'Grady's GAN team-mates - smarting from the loss of Boardman - began a long pursuit that was

taken up by other teams with their eyes on victory in Cholet. Twenty kilometres from the finish the threat was wiped out. Then the tension mounted again as a fall on the run-in knocked Mario Cipollini out of the final gallop. On Sunday the Italian sprinter crashed in the last seven kilometres in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Yesterday he rolled in nearly two minutes after the Dutchman Jeroen Blijlevens' sprint edged

out Nicola Minali and Jan Svoboda. It has been a bleak Tour so far for the Tuscan, who has taken more than 115 races with his potent sprinting.

After Boardman fell, the sprinters began skirmishing for a chance to wear the yellow jersey. Erik Zabel took the same route as O'Grady with time gained in intermediate sprints. Bo Hamburger tried the same, but managed to win with time to spare

to oust Zabel. Then O'Grady saw his chance.

"After Tuesday's race I was pretty depressed. I realise that opportunities like that don't come around very often," he said. "I did not get much sleep after that stage. I knew it would take one big sprint and good teamwork. My dream has really come true."

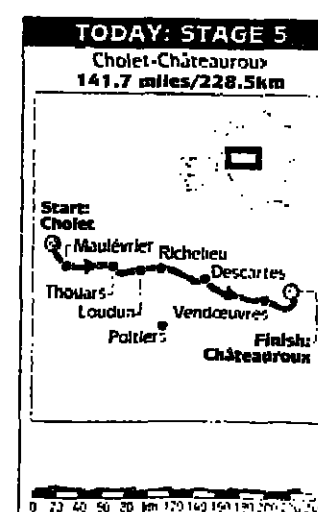
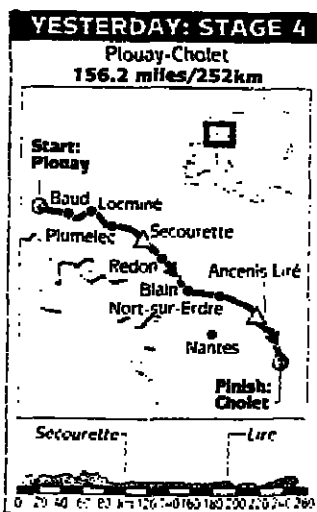
"The other day, Chris [Boardman] asked me to take his yellow jersey

to the team car, and said to me: 'Perhaps one day, mate, you will win one.'

The 24-year-old, who is based in Toulouse, takes over the yellow jersey from Hamburger, and is the first Australian to head the Tour since Anderson. "This has been my dream since I started cycling," O'Grady said. "It's very special to be the first since Anderson. I'm a happy man. Phil Anderson was the only one so far to hold the yellow jersey. Now there are two Australians. Phil was a hero of mine, an inspiration to take up cycling."

He won one stage in each of the three Tours he has previously entered. The glow of O'Grady's yellow jersey will be felt Down Under, and in Merseyside where Boardman is recovering and already planning his comeback. O'Grady might have got a little inspiration as the race passed through a Breton village where the side of a house was covered in racing jerseys of all types.

The Bretons love cycling and its heroes, but their thoughts on the villains that could be emerging over the Tour's developing drugs scandal have yet to be heard.



TOUR DE FRANCE RESULTS AND STANDINGS

TOUR DE FRANCE (From Plouay to Cholet, 252km) Fourth stage: 1 J Blijlevens (Neth) TVM 5hr 48min 32sec; 2 N Minali (It) Riso Scotti; 3 J Svoboda (Cz Rep) Mapei; 4 F Moncassin (Fr) GAN; 5 A Tchmil (Bel) Lotto; 6 E Zabel (Ger) Telekom; 7 T Steels (Bel) Mapei; 8 L Michaelson (Den) TVM; 9 M Scandri (GB) FDJ; 10 F Baldato (It) Riso Scotti; 11 A Verhoefen (Neth) Rubobank; all same time. 12 G Matteo Fagnini (It) Socco Asics behind; 13 S Martignello (It) Poli+6sec; 14 B Rils (Den) Telekom; 15 S Heulor (Fr) FDJ; 16 R McEwen (Aus) Rabobank; 17 B Vostkamp (Neth) TVM all same time, 18 F Guendou (Fr) FDJ +8; 19 A Casero (Sp) Vitalicio; 20 M Mauri (Sp) ONCE; both same time. **Overall standings:** 1 S O'Grady (Aus) GAN 19hr 43min 29sec; 2 B Hamburger (Den) Casino +11sec; 3 G Hincaupe (US)

US Postal same time: 4 J Heppner (Ger) Telekom +14; 5 X Jan (Fr) FDJ +32; 6 P Herve (Fr) Festina 33; 7 V Garcia-Acos (Sp) Banesto +34; 8 P Chantreau (Fr) Casino +39; 9 F Cabello (Sp) Kelme +58; 10 Zabel +1:01; 11 Svoboda +1:05; 12 Moncassin +1:08; 13 Steels +1:12; 14 Blijlevens +1:14; 15 Tchmil +1:19; 16 J Durand (Fr) Casino +1:21; 17 A Olano (Sp) Banesto; all same time; 18 L Jalabert (Fr) ONCE +1:22; 19 McEwen; 20 B Julich (US) Cofidis; both same time. **Selected others:** 24 A Olano (Sp) Banesto; +8; 26 J Ullrich (Ger) Telekom; 29 R Virenque (Fr) Festina; 33 M Pantani (It) Mercatone Uno; 100 A Zülle (Swi) Festina; all same time. **Overall standings:** 22 Ullrich +1:22; 23 Zülle +1:24; 30 Virenque +1:29; 142 Pantani +2:05.

Aussies expose familiar flaws

By DEREK PRINGLE
at Derby

Australia 204-6 England 140
Australia win by 64 runs

IF ENGLAND'S women cricketers used to have misgivings about not being judged in the same light as their male counterparts they can fret no longer. Based on the evidence here yesterday the pair have at least one overriding similarity - both make a habit of losing to Australia.

This was the England women's second defeat at the hands of the World Champions in four days. Yet if the Scarborough weather confused the balance of power in the first game, the home side losing by a short head, yesterday's result was just and proper. Needing 205 to win England were simply outplayed in all departments, losing the 50-over match by 64 runs.

The most depressing aspect, from the home side's point of view, will be that they removed their opponents' best player in the second over. Belinda Clarke is one of the top three batters in the world and her dismissal, padding up to an inswinger from the one-day debutant Lucy Pearson, was met with the kind of gleeful squeals teeny-boppers usually reserve for pop idols. You could tell England thought it was a big wicket.

Focusing too closely on one member of the opposition can have its down side and perhaps their early success caused them to step off the pedal. Let's face it, going for the jugular is something the England men are only just starting to come to terms with. As so often happens, Australia managed to wriggle free, mainly due to a pair of measured half-centuries from Lisa Keightley and Melanie Jones.



England's Jan Brittin goes on the attack on her way to 19 against Australia at Derby yesterday

Craig Prentiss/Allsport

The most plausible explanation for the margin of defeat, though, is that Australia are simply a better outfit and one that overcame the loss of their strongest player far better than England did, following the removal of Charlotte Edwards, run out for 12.

Called through for a quick single by Jan Brittin, Edwards was beaten by a slick throw to the wicketkeeper from the omnipresent Jones, the best out-fielder on either side. If the fielding was a high point for both teams, the judgement of a run was less good and, in all, six

players were caught short of their ground.

There is no doubt that the overall level of skill on display was impressive. However, what most women cricketers appear to lack is weight of shot, something not easily remedied on a pitch that appeared to have all the consistency of thick-skinned porridge. Consequently England could not accelerate when they most needed to - hence the kamikaze run-outs.

A diet of largely slower than medium bowling did not help matters either and it was sig-

nificant that the Australian opening bowler Cathryn Fitzpatrick, allegedly the fastest bowler in women's cricket (at a pace somewhere between Dermot Reeve and Adam Holoake), was also the easiest to time.

Not so the others and with the run-rate climbing to more than five runs per over, Brittin - England's most experienced campaigner - was yanked by the leg-spinner Olivia Magno. That left the captain Karen Smithies to take up the cudgels which she did for a while, sharing a stand of 57 with Melissa Reynard be-

fore the latter was yorked by Brownwyn Calver for 28.

With England now 115 for 5 and barely within loud-hailing distance, Smithies followed for 44. Her dismissal caused England to slip from view, the tail adding just 20 runs before falling to medium-pace Charmaine Mason, who finished with 3 for 24.

According to the England and Wales Cricket Board, women's cricket is a growth area, with more than 400,000 schoolgirls playing some form of the game. At present the County Championship involves

14 teams and takes place in a fortnight's time.

After that England will pick their Test team to play for the "Ashes". It is a series England, with their greater experience, have every confidence of winning. Before that they have three more matches in which to close, or at least narrow, the gulf that exists between them in one-day cricket. First, though, they must try to boost their confidence by winning at least two of their three remaining one-day matches which, on the evidence seen so far, will be no easy task.

Batt makes the best of a bowler's lot

By DAVID LLEWELLYN
at Guildford

Surrey 150
Middlesex 115

SURREY'S ANNUAL trip out of London is beginning to turn into an unwelcome tradition, enough to put the "grim" into their pigmy name. No matter whom it is against, the festival match would appear to be something of a watershed in the season. When they lose here it sparks a general decline in affairs. It happened in 1993, and again a year later. Then Surrey

arrived at the Woodbridge Road ground as Championship leaders - just as they did yesterday - and in 1994 they were soundly whipped by Warwickshire. They proceeded to lose a further four matches and any interest in the title race.

After rookie Chris Batt had helped bundle them out to what appeared to be an inadequate total, it began to look as though this would be a night-mare revisited - their own *Groundhog Day*. But when Mike Gatting became the third England captain to make a duck in the match, bowled by

Martin Bicknell off an inside edge, there was a sudden shift in perspective and Surrey pressed a little harder.

At the close, by which time the umpires were obliged to notify Lord's because a lot more than 15 wickets had fallen in the day, Surrey had bowled out Middlesex, gained a first-innings lead and had a firm grip on the match. The trauma of their own innings was long forgotten with Middlesex batsmen falling at regular intervals, beaten variously by swing, pace or guile.

It was as traumatic a day for

Middlesex as for Surrey. But it was simply dramatic for Batt. He is 21 and playing only his third first-class game. On his debut against Oxford University he took three wickets and followed that with 6 for 101 against Nottinghamshire. Yesterday he twice took two wickets in three balls, the first time accounting for England Test captain Alec Stewart and his one-day counterpart Adam Holoake, as Surrey slumped to 7 for 3.

On the second occasion Batt bettered that feat, the dismissals of Ben Holoake, Jonathan Batt and Ian Ward

coming in a 16-ball spell after tea for a return of 5 for 51, to leave Surrey's innings in tatters.

Angus Fraser mopped up to finish with 4 for 34, the first of those being Mark Butcher, just back after recovering from a cracked thumb and looking to hit the form that will win him a Test recall. He lasted three balls, unlucky to get one that appeared to stop on him. The only creditable Surrey batsmen were Ward, who dug in for more than two and a half hours for 35, and Alistair Brown, who scored a responsible 51 before driving Phil Tufnell carelessly to mid-off.

Northants are rocked by Smith and Aftab

By MIKE CAREY
at Leicester

Northamptonshire 322
Leicestershire 376-6

IN AN ideal world Northamptonshire would have followed up their batting heroics with some tight, combative bowling here yesterday. Alas, they performed like the Championship laggards they are and centuries by Ben Smith and Aftab Habib enabled Leicestershire to make the most of a pitch on which there was no margin for error.

Northamptonshire, despite that fact, bowled lamentably short. They also bowled lamentably wide. Sometimes they even bowled lamentably short and lamentably wide at the same time. It was no surprise that they did not take their first wicket until almost 5pm.

By then Smith and Habib, cruising along, had added 349 for the fourth wicket. They were closing in rapidly on the Leicestershire record stand of 290 by Peter Willey and Tim Bood in 1981 when Smith was caught off a top edge aiming an uncharacteristically weary-looking hook. Smith had put bat to ball with splendid timing from the

moment he drove the first half-volley of the day for four. Like most batsmen of his stock stature he is a resounding cutter and he made the most of the width that he was offered, facing 215 balls and hitting 22 fours.

Aftab was happy to drop anchor, the occasional wristy on-side stroke apart. Not much happened to suggest that Northamptonshire would take a wicket or that they even had a game plan. When the sun shone, it was the nearest to a dog-day afternoon there has been all season.

All this was in stark contrast to the way Leicestershire had lost their first three wickets in indifferent light the previous evening (another big minus for the experimental hours of play in this match). Franklyn Rose struggled to find length and line in yesterday's more equitable conditions, though he was not alone there. He must have guessed it was not his day when, aiming to kick the ball on to the stumps to run out Habib, he succeeded only in conceding four overthrows. Habib hardly needed such generosity. He looked rock solid and reached three figures from 113 balls with 14 fours.

Slow pitch proves too patchy for Essex irregulars

By HENRY BLOFELD
at Southend

Essex 292; Kent 8-0

CRICKET WAS hard work at Southchurch Park in a mildly chilly breeze under predominantly grey skies yesterday. Essex batted patchily on a slow pitch and, for most of the time, looked more like the bottom side in the County Championship than the Benson & Hedges Cup winners.

The wickets came as a reward for perseverance rather than from any great devilry in the pitch or from the bowlers and were the product more than anything of bad batting. The way in which Essex scored runs at the end of their innings - the last three wickets added 89 - absolved the pitch from any blame. The only time all day that the bat was really in charge was when Nasser Hussain and Stuart Law were together in a third-wicket stand of 74. Both

are fluent stroke-makers and did enough to suggest that they might have been about to see a stand to compare with Hussain and Paul Richards' at Lord's last Saturday.

When Law glanced Dean Headley for four and then, with a neat adjustment, ran him to third man for another and later came on to the front foot to drive, it was impossible to believe that he has had such an unproductive season. Hussain, too, was quick on his feet and

twice came down the pitch to drive Carl Hooper's offbreaks.

Then, Steve Marsh gave a turn to Matthew Fleming, whose brisk medium-paced seamers are not so bland as they may appear. At 113, Law glanced at Fleming and was caught behind - hardly the product of a plot by the bowler, more a batting mistake, but an important wicket none the less. Soon afterwards, Hussain drove at a wide one from Fleming and Hooper held a good catch at second slip.

After that there were some good strokes from Ronnie Irani before he was out to a brilliant diving catch by Hooper at mid-off. Barry Hyam, Essex's reserve wicketkeeper, steadied the last part of the innings with admirable composure and was helped at the end in an unlikely last-wicket stand of 47 by Peter Such, who always manages to bat as if he was walking on stilts. He played some good strokes, too, and provided excellent entertainment.

CRICKET SCOREBOARD

Britannic Assurance County Championship

Essex v Kent

SOUTHEND (Day 1 of 4) Kent (Aps) trail Essex (2pts) by 284 runs with all first-innings wickets in hand.

Essex won toss

ESSEX - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

*P J Prichard lbw b McCague... 15 0 3 28 39

A J Grayson lbw b Ealham... 8 0 0 46 68

N Hussain c Hooper b Fleming... 48 0 7 75 90

S C Law c Marsh b Fleming... 47 0 6 74 89

R C Irani c Hooper b Patel... 47 0 6 74 89

S D Peters c Ward b Hooper... 9 0 1 25 29

D R Law c Hooper b Ealham... 18 0 3 10 16

VS I Harty not out... 47 0 6 94 124

M C Fenton b McCague... 15 0 1 55 53

N Hussain c Marsh b Patel... 20 0 0 7 11

P M Such c Key b McCague... 25 0 4 38 42

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (54.1 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: D W Headley 17-2-53-0, M J McCague 18-1-8-75-3, M A Ealham 15-4-42-2, M M Patel 20-5-42-2, M V Fleming 14-5-30-2, C L Hooper 10-2-40-1.

KENT - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

R D Pickett not out... 3 0 0 18 24

R W T Key not out... 3 0 0 24 24

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (7.0 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Middlesex v Sussex

GUILDFORD (Day 2 of 4) Sussex (Aps) trail Middlesex (2pts) by 115 runs with four second-innings wickets in hand.

Sussex won toss

MIDDLESEX - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

M J Goring b (Schofield)...

J L Langer lbw b Bicknell...

M R Ramprakash c Barry b Tudor...

P M Wickett c B C Holoake b Tudor...

D C Marsh b Bicknell...

H R Brown not out...

K P Durrant c Stewart b B C Holoake...

R L Johnson c Salisbury b Mushaq...

C J Batt lbw b Mushaq...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (54.1 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: D W Headley 17-2-53-0, M J McCague 18-1-8-75-3, M A Ealham 15-4-42-2, M M Patel 20-5-42-2, M V Fleming 14-5-30-2, C L Hooper 10-2-40-1.

KENT - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

R D Pickett not out...

R W T Key not out...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (7.0 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: D W Headley 17-2-53-0, M J McCague 18-1-8-75-3, M A Ealham 15-4-42-2, M M Patel 20-5-42-2, M V Fleming 14-5-30-2, C L Hooper 10-2-40-1.

KENT - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

Warwickshire v Hampshire

GUILDFORD (Day 1 of 4) Warwickshire (Aps) trail Hampshire (2pts) by 115 runs with four second-innings wickets in hand.

Hampshire won toss

WARWICKSHIRE - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

M J Powell c Aynes b McCague...

T Frost b Hartley...

D H Kemp b McCague...

B C Law c Marsh b Fleming...

T J Pinner lbw b Hartley...

D R Brown c Udell b Stephenson...

H J Piper c Udell b Stephenson...

G Marsh b Morris...

N M R Smith c Whitaker b Morris...

A F Giles not out...

E S H Giddins not out...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (54.1 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: M C Root 4-3-2-0, N F Williams 3-0-0-0, G I Burgess and R A White.

SURREY v Middlesex

GUILDFORD (Day 1 of 4) Middlesex (Aps) trail Surrey (2pts) by 54 runs with all first-innings wickets in hand.

Surrey won toss

SURREY - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

M A Butcher c Tufnell b Fraser...

A J Stewart b Batt...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Gloucestershire v Sussex

GUILDFORD (Day 2 of 4) Sussex (Aps) trail Gloucestershire (2pts) by 115 runs with four second-innings wickets in hand.

Sussex won toss

GLoucestershire - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

T H Hancock c Humphries b Kirtley...

J Lewis c Humphries b Kirtley...

M G H Ricketts c Kirtley b Kirtley...

M I Church b Brown...

J R C Wickett c Taylor b Martin-Jenkins...

M C J Ball b Lewis...

A M Smith b Lewis...

C A Walsh not out...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (54.1 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: J D Lewis 19-5-73-4, R J Kirtley 17-4-53-1, S C Martin-Jenkins 19-9-56-2, M A Robinson 14-6-27-2, M G Brown 10-2-7-2.

SUSSEX - Second Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

M T E Pierce not out...

W G Khan c Russell b Smith...

M E Powell c Russell b Smith...

C J Adams c Church b Smith...

M G Brown c Allyn b Ball...

N R Taylor c Hewson b Lewis...

R C Martin-Jenkins c Russell b Lewis...

K P Burns c Blakey b Gough...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Worcestershire v Northamptonshire

LEICESTER (Day 2 of 4) Leicestershire (7pts) trail Worcestershire (2pts) by 115 runs with all first-innings wickets in hand.

Worcestershire won toss

WORCESTERSHIRE - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

S R Lampitt lbw b Akram...

R A Lampitt c Hogg b Austin...

P J Hinchey c Akram...

R Chapman not out...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (54.1 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: W A Akram 26-5-77-2, P J Martin 20-4-58-2, D A Smith 15-3-82-3, D Chappell 15-2-45-0, A Flintoff 14-2-51-3, M Watson 13-1-15-0.

LANCASHIRE - First Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

M A Artherton c Weston b Chapman...

P J Conway c Hogg b Hogg...

A Flintoff c Soltan b Newport...

G D Lloyd c Rhodes b Lampitt...

M Watson lbw b Leathdale...

W A Akram not out...

Batman (164 wickets)...

Total (54.1 overs)...

Falls: 1-23, 2-27, 3-110, 4-131, 5-160, 6-193, 7-203, 8-228, 9-245.

Bowling: M A Artherton 16-5-31-0, S Elworthy 21-8-8-2, W J Cresswell 11-4-0-0, B M McMillan 12-5-31-2, M Hayward 12-1-67-0, P L Symcox 25-6-60-5.

SOUTH AFRICA - Second Innings

Runs 6s 4s Bts Min

G F J Leithenber not out...

Durham v Sri Lanka

TAUNTON (Day 2 of 3) Sri Lanka, following-on, lead Somerset by three runs with seven wickets in hand.

Somerset won toss

Hannon trio chase Sprint

UNUSUALLY, The embryonic domestic fowl at East Everleigh remain untitled three days before the Weatherbys Super Sprint at Newbury.

In the seven runnings of the valuable five-furlong dash for two-year-olds, Richard Hannon, resident trainer at the Wiltshire establishment, has prepared three winners and picked up minor place prize money with 11 other horses.

But, even with six entries this time round, he is not banking on a large payday on Saturday. "I don't think we can win it," he said. "There are a couple we've got no chance with, Tim Easterby's for one. And Jack Berry's. But if you're not in you can't win."

The £120,000 Newbury contest is a relative innovation in the racing calendar, designed to give the smaller owner and trainer a crack at some serious money. The

race is restricted to horses which cost 30,000 guineas or less when bought as yearlings at public auction, which means that names like Sheikh Mohammed, Hamdan Al Maktoum, Michael Stoute and Henry Cecil tend not to feature on the cast-list.

Unsurprisingly, Hannon is a devoted supporter of the concept and his 23 runners to date have earned £237,694 for their owners. He hardly falls into the "small" category, though, in his profession: he has some 150 horses in his care, was champion trainer six years ago, has three 2,000 Guineas winners (Mon Filis, Tirol and Don't Forget Me) to his credit. And he seems to be as good a trainer of men as horses; former assistant Brian Meehan is now successfully carving out his own career.

But, by his own admission, he has tended to conquer the game through quantity rather

Prize money from a specialist race has been plundered by a trainer whose runners must once again be feared. Sue Montgomery reports

than quality. "There are plenty of us who don't have Arab owners and don't often get the chance of winning Group One prizes," he said. "In terms of numbers I may be nearly the same as John Dunlop or Henry Cecil, but I don't have the same type of horse. Mine are nearly all handicappers and the last type of two-year-old. And for us at the lower end of the scale these races are great, a real serious target to aim for."

Hannon's three winners were Miss Stamper (1996), Risky (1997) and the pocket rocket Lyric Fantasy. The last-named, previously win-

idea that they cost and an above-average performer is usually needed to win the Newbury race.

The aforementioned Tim Easterby contender, Flinders, has already proved herself that. The daughter of Common Grounds, a 21,000 guineas yearling, is unbeaten in three races over Saturday's distance. Last time out she won the Windsor Castle Stakes at Royal Ascot rather easily and Hannon has a yardstick to the merit of that performance - his Sarson, subsequently a winner, having finished second. Jack Berry's Queensland Star has more to prove, having disappointed at Epsom and Ascot after winning his first two starts.

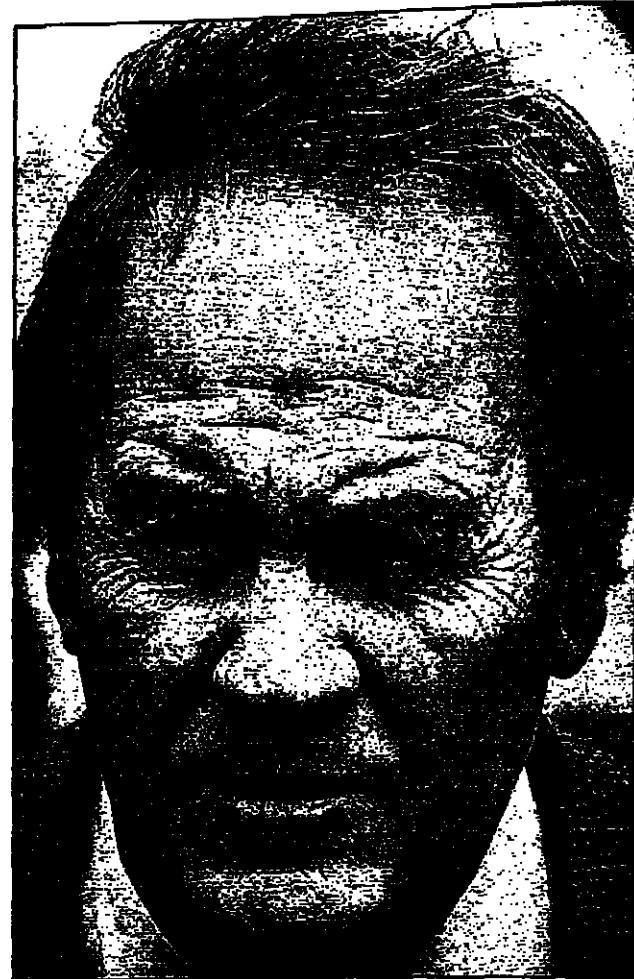
Hannon is likely to challenge with three of his half-dozen entries. The filly Vintage Pride, who cost 23,000 guineas as a yearling, has yet to score, her best run being a third place at

Sandown. Cheyenne Gold (10,000 Irish guineas) has already won twice, at Haydock and Windsor, and shown he is very quick. But Hannon rates Choto Mate (13,500 Irish guineas) his best prospect.

The Brief Truce colt won in good style at Goodwood in May before finishing unplaced behind Rossell in the Norfolk Stakes at Ascot.

There was, however, an excuse at Ascot, as Choto Mate became upset by the antics of a filly in the adjacent stall. He himself must pass a stalls test at Bath today before he is given the go-ahead for Saturday.

"He's a pretty good horse and apart from his behaviour in the stalls he's not done a lot wrong," said Hannon. "Cheyenne Gold could go well, too. We just hope for a decent draw. Pat Eddery will ride Cheyenne Gold and Richard Hughes Choto Mate."



Richard Hannon: Aiming three at Saturday's event

DONCASTER

2.10 Enemy Action 3.40 Navlasky
2.40 Northern Svergl 4.10 Cadette
3.10 Agnor 4.40 Mouché

GOING: Good to Firm (Firm in places)
STALLS: Straight course - stands side, Round course - inside; Round mile - outside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.
Left-hand, pass-shed course with mile straight.
Course 2 is of form off the A430 (1st) 3.5.4. Blue link from Doncaster Central station. **ADMISSION:** Club £5; Grandstand £2; Family Enclosure £2 (under-16s free at enclosure). **CAR PARK:** Free.
LEADING TRAINERS: 1. Hannon 33-33 (171%), 2. J. Gosden 27-33 (20%), 3. J. Dunlop 24-18 (125%), 4. H. Cecil 21-28 (23%), 5. Mrs J. Remden 20-20 (100%).
LEADING JOCKEYS: K. Darley 34-258 (52%), K. Fallon 31-217 (43%), M. Hills 30-166 (181%), L. Dettori 30-150 (155%), J. Fortune 18-78 (24%), W. Ryan 15-121 (124%).
FAVOURITES: 2.10-2.10 (25%), 3.10-3.10 (25%), 4.10-4.10 (25%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Risky Experience (1997), 2.10-2.10 (25%).

2.10 CAPRICORN NOVICE STAKES (CLASS D) £4,600 added 2YO fillies 6f Penalty Value £3,273
1. BLUE MELODY (USA) (9) (Shahid Mohammed) 4.00 9.1 L Dettori 3
2. ENEMY ACTION (USA) (24) (D) (Chelton) 4.00 9.1 K Fallon 2
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Twickenham's tough talk over England threat

RUGBY UNION
BY CHRIS HEWETT

TWICKENHAM'S OLD school tie brigade has long been derided as a toothless anachronism, but hell hath no fury like a pinstripe scorned. Not before time, the Rugby Football Union yesterday bared its molars in the direction of the game's worldwide governing body, the International Board, and told its members in words of one syllable to stop threatening England with sanctions that, according to the best legal

advice, would be laughed out of the nearest court. The RFU's management board, incensed by the latest IB talk of expelling England from international competition because of the decision by the Allied Dunbar Premiership clubs to seek clarification of their status through the European Commission, pledged to fight its corner, if necessary with the aid of a full-blown team of specialist lawyers. "If this matter is to be debated at the executive committee of the IB, it is assumed the RFU will be represented and have

the right to make such observation as is deemed appropriate," Ken Whitehead, the director of support services at Twickenham, said in a sharp letter to the board. "It may well be the RFU will wish to be accompanied by its legal advisors." Senior RFU members are convinced that the board is indulging in black propaganda in an effort to facilitate victory for Cliff Brittle, the estranged management board chairman, at this weekend's annual general meeting. The union is supporting a challenge by one of its

own number, Brian Baister, and is deeply suspicious of the timing of this latest exercise in IB brinkmanship. "It is fundamental for the well-being of the game in England and, it is thought, Europe that the RFU has a workable and ongoing agreement with the clubs," Whitehead said in his letter. "The RFU cannot remove from the clubs the rights conferred upon them by virtue of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, which prevail over RFU regulations and, indeed, Eng-

lish law." He added that the IB's threat to expel England because of the clubs' EC application was "not sustainable". Meanwhile, the political point-scoring continued south of the equator as the three rugby superpowers announced plans to give Argentina an annual Test series against Australia, New Zealand or South Africa from next year, when two matches against the Springboks have been scheduled. "It is a key element of our strategy to assist the ongoing development of Puma rugby," Rob

Fisher, the Sanzar chairman from New Zealand, said. Stung by sharp criticism of their marginalisation of second division southern hemisphere powers - the dash for Rupert Murdoch money led by the Wallabies, the All Blacks and the Springboks - in 1995 left Argentina, Zimbabwe, Namibia and the South Sea Islands swinging in the wind - the Sanzar unions now claim to be pursuing a policy of "globalisation". Sadly, they have no plans to include Western Samoa or Fiji in the lucrative Super 12 tour-

nament, about which they remain fiercely protectionist. In the aftermath of the unsuccessful summer tours by all four home unions, it suits the Sanzar countries to court new opponents, especially as Clive Woodward, the England coach, has no intention of fulfilling next summer's Cook Cup fixture in Australia. One of Woodward's former international colleagues, Bill Beaumont, is making the right diplomatic noises, however. The chairman of the RFU's national playing committee has assured the southern

hemisphere that England, at least, will provide stiffer opposition in future. "We urgently need regular contact with Australia, New Zealand and South Africa but we simply cannot afford to pit understrength sides against the powerful Test nations of the world," the former Lions captain said yesterday. "We must work with the clubs to ensure our players are fit to compete on the best possible footing on future tours. I want to make sure that England's 1998 summer was a low point, a one-off."

Clubs agree new Sky deal to avert split

RUGBY LEAGUE
BY DAVE HADFIELD

PEACE HAS broken out in the game - at least as far as the thorny issues of a new BSkyB contract and the criteria for entry to Super League are concerned.

A special meeting of clubs at Headingley yesterday unanimously agreed to accept a new five-year deal, worth a total of £56.8m, of which £45m will go to Super League clubs and the rest to the game at large and to lower division clubs, who will not be a part of any further contracts.

There was also unanimous agreement on the mechanism by which clubs, existing or newly created, can enter Super League.

A side that wins the First Division will now have its claims assessed by an independent panel which is to be set up. The same will apply to any new application, such as the ones from Gateshead, Cardiff and Swansea which are currently on the table.

"The essential thing was that it should be seen to be

fair," said the chairman of the Rugby League, Sir Rodney Walker, who described the end of a quarrel that had threatened to split the game as "an outbreak of collective common sense".

"The game has a history of drawing back from the abyss and this shows that rugby league is more important than any personal interests," he added.

The managing director of Super League, Maurice Lindsay, welcomed the agreement in equally fulsome terms. "I'm absolutely delighted for everyone in the game," he said. "We can put all our frustrations, all those time-consuming meetings behind us and get on with playing the game."

The London Broncos have weeded out another player but have turned down the chance to re-sign Julian O'Neill. O'Neill, who has fallen foul of yet another employer at South Sydney, has approached London, for whom he played briefly in 1995.

The Broncos came close to taking a risk with him once more but their coach, Tony Currie, decided against the

move because of the player's history of off-field problems. He has also chosen to release a fourth player - the scrum-half Damien Chapman.

Chapman is returning to Australia along with Roger Best, Darren Higgins and Butch Paton while the Scottish centre, Iain Higgins, has gone on loan to Hunslet.

Newcomer Shane Millard will not have a work permit in time to play against Bradford in Edinburgh on Saturday, but Currie will still be able to field his strongest line-up for months.

Bradford, who have Bernard Dwyer available after winning his appeal against a one-match ban, could, after all, provide a future home for the banned Newcastle Knights forward Wayne Richards.

The Bulls' coach, Matthew Elliott, has spoken to Richards about the possibility of him coming to England when a 22-match ban for steroid abuse is completed next year.

"He is a good player and a solid human being, but to call it a strong possibility would be premature," Elliott said.

Wilkinson leads the British challenge

TENNIS

CHRIS WILKINSON led the British assault on the LTA Manchester Challenger title at Didsbury yesterday afternoon.

Wilkinson, the British No 3 and a former champion, was one of three home winners in the first round after a 7-6, 6-1 success over the qualifier Arvind Parmar. The victory came as a relief to the 28-year-old, who lost to his doubles partner, Danny Sapsford, in the opening round at Bristol last week.

The first set was close largely because Wilkinson struggled to convert his break points, but he eventually won a one-sided tie-break. Wilkinson's second set display was more convincing, especially after Parmar slipped and picked up an injury in the latter stages.

"Last week was a hiccup rather than a major setback," Wilkinson said. "Overall, I'm

happy with my form and heading in the right direction in the rankings."

Wilkinson now faces Olivier Mutis of France for a place in the quarter-finals.

Mark Petchey, 28 next month, defeated South Africa's Kyle Rudman, 6-3, 6-0, and now plays the 1997 runner-up, Stefano Pescosolido of Italy.

Victory in this tournament might persuade Petchey to reconsider his retirement plans. "It could have a bearing on what I decide to do because I'll be making a decision shortly," the Essex-based former Davis Cup player said.

Luke Milligan completed the British hat-trick when he knocked out Anthony Dupuis. Milligan resumed 3-2 up overnight and went on to complete a 6-3 6-4 victory over the Frenchman.

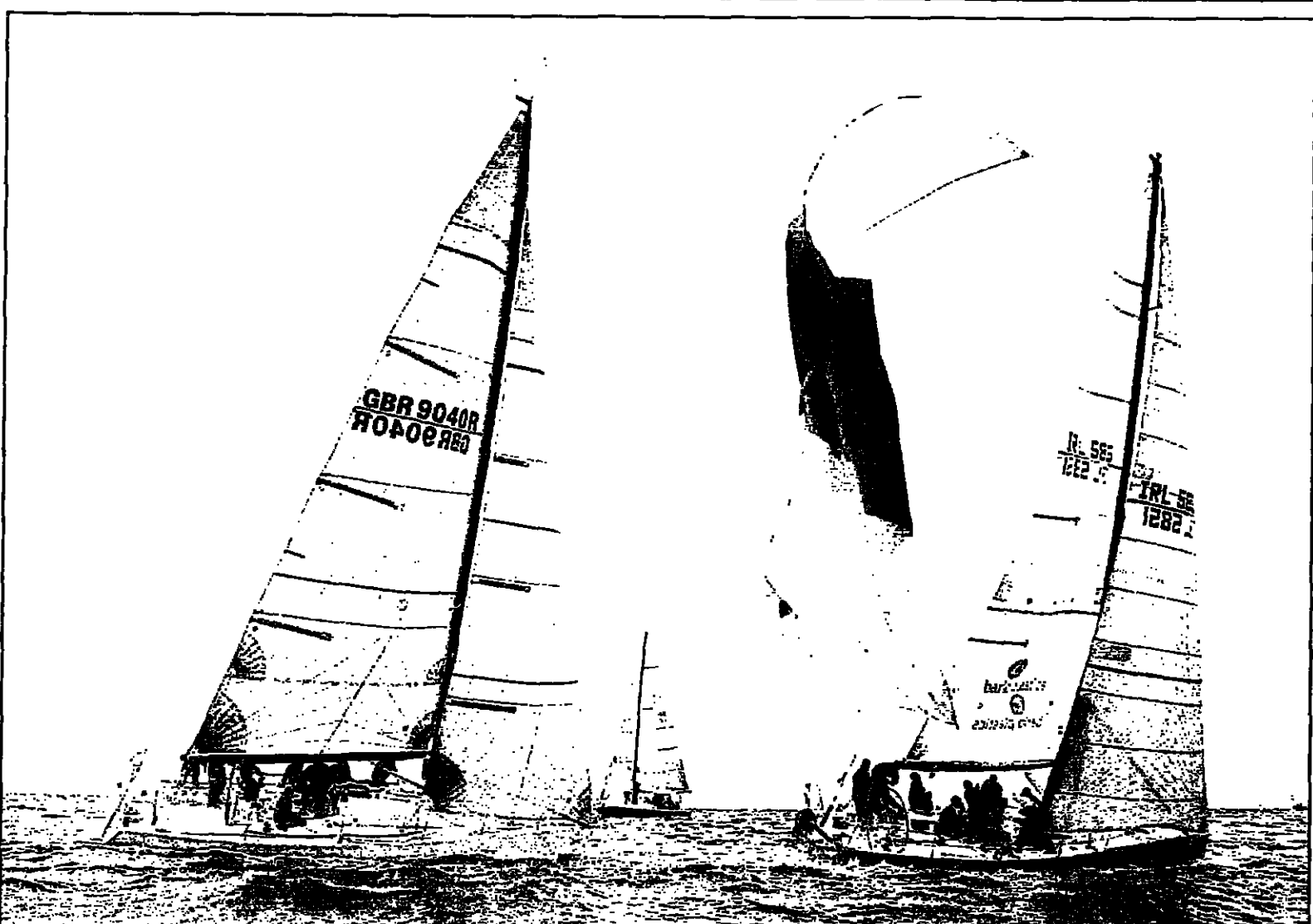
Milligan is now in line to meet the seventh seed, Rogier Wassen of the Netherlands or

another Frenchman, Julien Boutter.

Another British player, Jamie Delgado, overcame an Australian qualifier, Toby Mitchell, 7-5, 6-1, to earn a crack at the defending champion, Spain's Oscar Burrieza. However, Nick Gould, a Bristol semi-finalist last weekend, went down 6-2, 6-4 to the sixth seed, Alex Radulescu of Germany.

Spain's Davis Cup captain, Manolo Santana, has dropped the world No 7, Alex Corretja, from the doubles team for this weekend's quarter-final tie against Switzerland. Corretja, who lost his doubles match with Javier Sanchez in the last round against Brazil, will be replaced by Julian Alonso, who has partnered Sanchez.

"We've got up to an hour before the start of the match to change the line-up again, but in principle this will be the new combination," Santana said.



Harold Cudmore's Barlo Plastics (right) finds trouble as a spinnaker jams in the Ford Week Regatta in Crosshaven yesterday. Provision

Swell party atmosphere in Cork

SAILING

BY STUART ALEXANDER in Cork

JUST AS Willie John McBride, a Protestant Ulsterman, could count on the throstiest of roars when he led Ireland's rugby team on to the hallowed turf of Lansdowne Road in Dublin, so the welcome for everyone - from just about everywhere - involved with Ford Cork Week beats anything that politics or the weather can throw at them in Crosshaven.

From a total of 128 entries 10 years ago, the number at Cork has swelled in this biennial jamboree to over 670 this year, with 70 per cent of the entries coming from outside the Republic, including a contingent from the north, many from England, Wales and Scotland, and even a sprinkling from France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Unofficially Ireland's national regatta, Ford Cork Week has provided a tremendous boost for the local economy and the local club, White bed and breakfasts and bars turn

over huge amounts of cash, an expanded Royal Cork Yacht Club has been able to develop a hi-tech facility incorporating a substantial marina, much underground cabling, and a waste disposal management system.

A specially written software programme not only copes with berthing the boats every night, it has increased capacity and could, according to the event's chairman, Clayton Love, cope with over 100 boats more.

While the avowed aim is to promote sailing for all, a by-

product has been the creation of the second biggest gathering of racing yachts in the British Isles and, if you took the dayboat classes out of Cowes week, it would be the biggest by a substantial margin.

Part of the appeal is the party atmosphere ashore in a greatly expanded tented village. But Love also points to a willingness to move forward every time, rather than consolidate, and to providing a variety of races, with something different every day, for the competitors. "And because we lay on two races for them each

day on six different courses," Love said, "if you have a disaster in the first one you can always make up for it in the second."

Ford Cork Week also attracts class championships to join in the £750,000 event, instead of organising their own. The Sigma 33s and 38s are here for a second time, the locally developed 1720 sport boat has its European championship, but in the 33s Ian Nicholson's St. Joan is being made to work hard to win back the title they first won in Cork in 1995.

Results, Digest, page 27

Wenger may return to Japan

FOOTBALL

ARSENAL WENGER. Arsenal's

Double-winning manager, has refused to rule out a return to Japan to take the national team to the 2002 World Cup finals. "It's not impossible, nothing's impossible in football," said Wenger, who turned the J-League club Nagoya Grampus Eight into champions, tenders during his spell in Japan between 1995 and 1996.

"I've got great memories of my time in Japan and I've always thought that one day I would go back there to work," he added. "If the Japanese

want me to coach their team at the next World Cup, then that's a big honour, a great honour, for me. At the moment there's no proposal to do so but, if one came, I would think about it very seriously at the time."

"I have one more year to go on my contract with Arsenal and I will at least give them this year," he told Tokyo's Daily Yomiuri.

Japan's football association has a number of candidates in mind to replace the head coach Takeshi Okada, who resigned after losing all three matches at France 98. Wenger has also been linked with the French

national post, about to be relinquished by Aimé Jacquet. Organisers of England's campaign to host the 2006 World Cup have insisted that they had strengthened their chances of winning the bidding race during France 98, despite the ugly scenes involving England fans in Marseille.

Germany and South Africa are England's main opponents, although other African countries and Australia could also enter the race before the final decision is made in June 2000. However, the campaign director, Alec McGivern, maintained that the intense lobbying

campaign featuring himself, Sir Bobby Charlton and the sports minister, Tony Banks, which took place in France over the past couple of months, had helped England's cause.

"We feel we have strengthened our position during the tournament and that we are in front so that we are the candidates that the others have to beat," he said yesterday.

England have dropped five places to 10th in the latest Fifa world rankings. Scotland, meanwhile, have moved up five spots to 36th in the list issued by the sport's world governing body.

Inquiry into riot at Reading

BOXING

BY DAVID FIELD

BRITISH BOXING will hold an inquiry into the disturbances which flared during Geoff McCreesh's British welterweight title victory in Reading on Tuesday night. The mayhem came either side of McCreesh's seventh-round knock-out of the Welshman Michael Smyth at the Riverside Leisure Centre. "I am sick for British sport," said Robert Smith, secretary of the Board of Control's Southern Area Council, reflecting on the crowd trouble.

The first flashpoint came at the end of the sixth round when it appeared Smyth's noisy supporters suddenly intermingled with those of McCreesh.

The boxing was held up while the fighting went on outside the ring. The delay lasted five minutes, and 71 seconds later McCreesh had finished the job. But the trouble flared again and police rushed to the scene.

It is the worst crowd trouble at a British promotion since Nigel Benn defended his World Boxing Council super-middleweight title against Juan Carlos Gimenez at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre in September 1994.

McCreesh won a Lonsdale belt outright but was robbed of the presentation by the fighting. He believes that the riot was caused deliberately by Smyth's supporters to "give him a breather".

RACING RESULTS

YARMOUTH

2.00 (net selling stakes)
1. GUESSTINATION (G) Faulkner 9-2
2. Blackblade (M) Hills 11-8 fav
3. Sassy (D) Sweeney 5-1
Also: 5-2 Thunders Folly (4th), 7-1 Ervant (5th), 20-1 Capricious (6th), 30-1 Doodlad Executive.
7.00 (11-1, 1/2, 3/4, and 2/3, winner buy gold by known fact out of Best Guess, trained by J Pearce, Newmarket, for The Euxine Two Partnership) Total: win £500 places £180 £180 Dual forecast: £470 CSF: £385.
2.30 (11 maiden stakes, 2yo)
1. COVER GIRL (S) Sanders 5-1
2. Emma Lynn (A) Nicholls 12-1
3. Ticker Chances (K) Fallon 7-2
Also: 11-4 Fav Powergold (4th), 4-1 Safford Flyer (5th), 1-1 Prince of Argon (6th), 1-1 Bridged Blue (6th), 20-1 Favourite (6th).
7.00 (11-1, 1/2, 3/4, and 2/3, winner chestnut filly by Common Grounds out of Peace Camer, trained by St Mark Prescott, Newmarket, for The Spectators) Total: win £200 places £100 £100 Dual forecast: £170 CSF: £135.
3.00 (11 handicap, 11/2)
1. MIGRATE (D) Dettori 7-1
2. Delmar (N) Carlisle 14-1
3. Shocker (M) Hills 5-4 fav
Also: 7-2 Sandcastle (6th), 5-1 Gypsy Fier (6th), 1-1 Rich in Love (6th), 20-1 Cornish Dancer (6th), 20-1 Natalie Pat, 20-1 Princess of Hearts, 20-1 Seraph, 20-1 Triple High, 40-1 Kates Trust.
12.00 (11-1, 1/2, 3/4, and 2/3, winner chestnut filly by Storm Bird out of Home Leave, trained

by J Gooden, Newmarket, for Sheikh Mohammed) Total: win £250 places £130 £130 Dual forecast: £230 CSF: £185.
2.00 (11-1, 1/2, 3/4, and 2/3, winner bay gelding by Baring out of Whetcam, trained by A Jarvis, Dorset, for A R Money) Total: win £250 places £130 £130 Dual forecast: £230 CSF: £185.
2.30 (11-1, 1/2, 3/4, and 2/3, winner bay filly by Fairy King out of Nicole Wynn, trained by J Gooden, Newmarket, for George Strawbridge) Total: win £250 places £130 £130 Dual forecast: £230 CSF: £185.
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The 127th Open Championship: A former winner is conquering his wilder instincts both on and off the course

Daly routine makes every day a challenge

BY TIM GLOVER
at Royal Birkdale

WHAT PRICE an alcoholic, cigarette-smoking, overweight, junk-food junkie winning the Open Championship? Much slimmer, apparently, than John Daly's waistline.

Daly was 80-1 when he lifted the silver claret jug at St Andrews three years ago, but he was at home at the home of golf even if he was, by his own admission, a miserable son of a bitch.

Compared with Royal Birkdale, St Andrews looks as wide as the Russian Steppes. The Lancashire links is not Daly's cup of tea for the simple reason that he is unable to unleash his Big Bertha driver. "At St Andrews you can hit it left all day and be on another fairway," Daly said. "Here, if you miss a fairway you're dead. There's no let up."

Nor is there any respite from

Daly's daily battle with the bottle. Once again he is on the wagon after some well-publicised lapses and yesterday the reformed "Wild Thing" explained just how difficult it is to remain dry.

"I have been doing real well for the last year and three months," Daly said. He might have added one week, two days and 35 minutes. "I am winning a major every day I wake up. It's good to be back here but if I was to win the Open it wouldn't compare to what I do on an everyday basis in my life right now. People who've been through it and know what it's like could understand it, but you know your body changes. My body has changed an awful lot."

"Mentally I think I am a little tougher, but physically I am overweight and out of shape because all I want to do is eat. That's been the tough thing being in this programme. You go from one addiction to another and mine seems to be food. Hopefully that will change

in a few years of sobriety. I don't know. They say it does."

Wherever he is Daly attends meetings with bodies like Alcoholics Anonymous but, as he recognises, there is nothing anonymous about alcoholics. "There's drunks all over this world. Man, we're everywhere." It is possible, of course, that in the press tent Daly, who was drinking a bottle of Diet Coke, was preaching to the unconverted.

A manifestation of eating burgers, pizza, steak and any chocolate he can get his hands on was that Daly's weight rose to 18st, although he has since lost about 20lb.

"I crave sugar every day. If you are an alcoholic like I am, you crave sugar when you quit drinking because alcohol turns into sugar in your body."

There has been one positive side-effect of behaving like Billy Bunter. "Actually it's helped," Daly said, "because my right arm hugs this fat belly and it never gets out of place now

when I swing. When I lose weight it flies all over the place. To lose another 20lb would be real nice but this is the way I am made. I'm made to be fat so there's no sense in worrying about it."

Confounding the advice against drinking and driving, Daly admitted that he was drinking heavily when he won, in the most sensational of styles, the US PGA Championship at Crooked Stick, Indiana, in 1991 after getting in as ninth reserve.

When he won the Open in 1995, the claret jug remained dry but Daly was in no mood to savour the occasion. "It was a great win but I wasn't happy personally. I had gone four and a half years without a drink but I was the most miserable guy in the world because I was trying to find reasons why I should be drinking."

Daly was joint 33rd in the Masters and joint 53rd in the US Open at the Olympic club in San Francisco last month when,

once again, the course inhibited his driving.

"It sucks," he said. Seeing Daly use an iron off the tee is a bit like seeing Michael Schumacher confined to a milk float. "The problem with my life right now is I don't know how the hell I am going to wake up every morning. I don't know what mood I am going to be in. Today I may say I am going to hit irons, tomorrow I may hit a driver on the first hole."

Given that he has no great expectations this week, it would be almost miraculous for Daly to win on Sunday but then again, he seems to believe in miracles. He has been reunited with his wife, a development he described as a "miracle in itself".

If golf can be described as the eternal, internal struggle so can Daly's ongoing experience in drinking a vodka-free cola.

"As long as I can get through a day and not drink it is a miracle," he said. "The next tournament I win is going to be the most precious one."



John Daly battles against the elements in practice at Royal Birkdale yesterday. AFP

Where to find Birkdale's birds and birdies

OVER THE last three Opens at Royal Birkdale, the winning score has come down from Johnny Miller's one under par in 1976, past Tom Watson's five under par in 1983 to Ian

Baker-Finch's eight under seven years ago. But there the trend may stop.

With the greens rebuilt and re-contoured, Sir Michael Bonallack, the secretary of the Royal and

Ancient, reckons the scoring will be one to two shots higher per round than in 1991. With the wind expected to blow as well, the percentage of scores under par for each hole

will probably fall from the figures for the 1991 championship listed below.

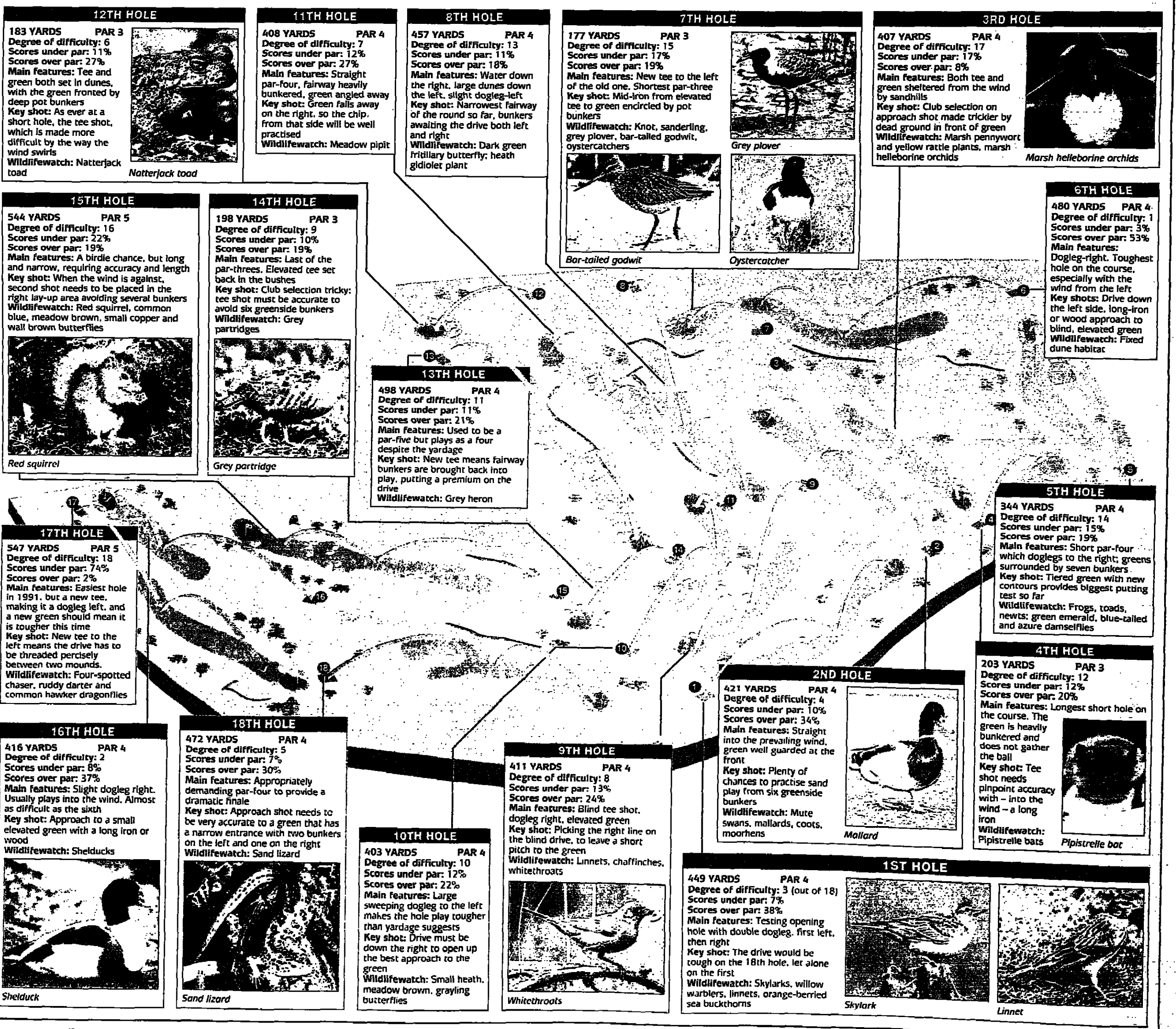
As well as being recognised as one of the finest courses in Britain, Birkdale was last year a win-

ner of the Golf Environment award run by the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association. The sand dunes of the Sefton Coast are the largest dune system in

the United Kingdom at over 2,000 hectares and Birkdale is just a part of the Southport Sand Dunes and Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest. The area provides a

sanctuary for wading birds and rare species of toads and lizards, as well as being home to nationally important plants and orchids.

Andy Farrell



The 127th Open Championship: Britain's most promising young amateur impresses Faldo and Els in practice round

Rose's pride among the lions

By RICHARD EDMONDSON at Royal Birkdale

THE CLARET JUG would be a most inappropriate reward for Justin Rose should he win the Open on Sunday. He should instead hold aloft the Lemonade Beaker. Britain's leading amateur will be 18 only at the end of this month.

If Rose makes the cut this week it will be considered a triumph, but whatever his fate he will take away the benefit of a golfing crammer in yesterday's practice round. When Rose saw the grid of the trial day he thought it might be a good idea to enter his name next to those of Messrs Ernie Els, Nick Faldo and Mark McNulty. They welcomed him gladly.

It was a round with the walking wounded. A field hospital should really have been trailing the party in case of deterioration to either Els's back or Faldo's elbow. Faldo will be 41 on Saturday, while McNulty is 44. The gallery was following a museum.

Rose arrived for this tour of duty with shades perched on top of his cap, Test-match style. He is tall but that does not disguise his youth. He looks as though he has only just got off a skateboard. The young man appeared slightly embarrassed in this neon company. There were darting glances to check his etiquette was up to scratch and repeated checking of his partners' position. One step out of place and he could have damaged some rather delicate chassis.

The body language was demonstrably juvenile. Rose did not look as impressive as the establishment, but some of his shots did. On the second he actually outdrew the great Ernie, which was such an oddity that a diving swift appeared to come down to check the relative arrangement of the balls. It was possible to see this grouping, as the coming together of the old and the new. Faldo is the ancient lion, an animal still with the pride although the flies are beginning to buzz around his muzzle. Rose is considered the most sublime young talent since Sandy Lyle marched through the junior ranks.

Rose was born in South Africa and traces of the veld remain in his voice. His father, Ken, who continues to coach him, used to bribe the infant Justin with promises of a train set and sweets. The Roses' assortment moved to Britain when the boy was five, by which time he had already hit a lot of balls. He first started swinging



Justin Rose, a strong contender to be leading amateur this week, practises escaping from a bunker at Royal Birkdale yesterday

David Ashdown

with a plastic club, aged 11 months. Rose was a scratch golfer aged 12, and two years later, he broke the North Hants course record with a 65. The same year he became the youngest player to compete in the final qualifying stages for the Open. This was the same mangle he had to come through this week, when Rose qualified second at Hillsdale. In 1995, he won the English Under-16 and Under-18 titles, the Hampshire Boys, the Hampshire Hog and the Stoneham Trophy. The mantlepiece was groaning.

Rose has played at every representative amateur level, including senior. Last August, he became the youngest ever Walker Cup player when he competed at Quaker Ridge outside New York. The tire took the opening tee shot of the confrontation and put it out of bounds, out was nevertheless the sole redeeming performer in a thrashing for Great Britain and Ireland.

The amateur title remains an omission and is likely to continue to do so. If Rose performs with credit on the Lancashire coast, and America's Matt Kuchar is his main obstacle to the silver medal, he will consider turning professional. Next week's Dutch Open may mark the genesis of a paid career.

There is no single explosive element to Rose's game, although all his playing partners observe that there is nothing either in the obvious weakness column and that the teenager has a cerebral approach well beyond his years. Certainly there were kind words for him yesterday. "They were encouraging and very complimentary about the way I was hitting the ball," Rose reported of his playing partners. "I was watching them hitting balls at the beginning and then I suddenly realised, wow, I've got to hit one now. It was a little bit strange."

"Just being around with Ernie helped. You see how these players have their practice rounds and pick up the little tips, chipping from trouble towards where they think the pin placements might be." Faldo said. "He has got a very solid swing for a 17-year-old. Gosh, I had a lot more loops at that age." The old master had

earlier been able to give Rose a lesson in thrift. After driving at the eighth, Faldo apparently lost his tee in the dune jungle. But he was soon wading in the grassy sea and found not only his tee but, to great delight, several others. You could tell he had been a while since he won. Over four and a half hours after they set out, the caravan came in view of the clubhouse stands. Faldo had been his measured self and Els also rolled along unhurriedly. Justin had been a rose between two yawns.

Police tighten security cordon around course

By ANDY FARRELL

SECURITY WAS stepped up at Royal Birkdale yesterday to a level never seen previously at an Open Championship. Cars arriving at the course were videoed and teams of police, including sniffer dogs, searched all vehicles.

Police were quick to say that the move was not in response to any particular incident or threat against any individual. "Merseyside Police were involved with the scare at the Grand National and obviously with the additional worry over the Drumcree situation they are extra keen not to take any

chances." Sir Michael Bonalack, secretary of the Royal and Ancient, said. "They don't want to anticipate anything, but they are just not prepared to take any chances. They don't want the situation to arise that they had at the Grand National where they had to abandon everything and you

weren't allowed back to your cars." The round-the-clock surveillance system, operated at every Open since 1986, caught two people stealing balls from the practice range on Monday night. In 1983, the sixth green was vandalised in support of an inmate of Liverpool prison.

The young man had signed hundreds of autographs along the way for those even younger than himself who thought they might be collecting something for the future. "I'll never forget my name after today, that for sure," he said. Now Rose has the opportunity to ensure we do not forget it either.

Wild's late slip lets in Whitaker

By GENEVIEVE MURPHY at Harrogate

MICHAEL WHITAKER continued his family's domination of the Great Yorkshire Show when riding Virtual Village Silk to win the Daewoo Great Northern Championship, which was the major contest yesterday. He had already won here with Twostep and his elder brother, John, had triumphed in the top class on Tuesday.

Sharon Wild had the distinction of jumping the only clear round over the opening course for the Daewoo contest but, unfortunately for her, the rules stipulate that eight horses go through to the second round, carrying any faults forward.

Michael Whitaker had forgotten this rule and was about to put his horse away after a single error incurred when the nine-year-old Silk dropped a foot on the tape at the water. Nigel Coupe, also on four faults with Twostep, reminded his mentor and Silk therefore remained in the collecting ring.

Although he has not always looked sound, the French-bred Silk proved that he is a big, bold jumper when achieving one of only two second-round clears. He held the lead when Wild, riding the little 15-year-old mare Dee Jays Rio Grande, came in last to jump. She had been fourth in the Queen Elizabeth II Cup at Hickstead on Saturday with the same mare, who is a grand-daughter of Mill Reef. She again rode with great aplomb, aiming for a steady clear round.

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England take a youthful approach in South Africa

By BILL COLWILL

ENGLAND OPEN their 10-day tour of South Africa this afternoon with a warm-up game against the South African Under-21 squad in East London. They then play the first two of their five Tests in East London at the weekend, before moving on to Port Elizabeth with the final Test in Pretoria on Sunday week.

The squad arrived in South Africa yesterday with no injury problems and will want a convincing win against the juniors, who include four players from the senior squad, to set them up for the Test series.

Although they did not qualify for the last World Cup in Utrecht, South Africa have come a long way since their wilderness, initially under their English coach, Gavin Featherstone, and their Oxford University and Reading captain, Wayne Graham.

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SPORT

O'GRADY'S RAID AT TOUR DE FRANCE P22 • HANNON DREAMS OF ANOTHER FANTASY P24

History is the goal for Westwood

BY ANDY FARRELL
at Royal Birkdale

FOUR DAYS after Emmanuel Petit provided a dramatic finale to the World Cup, Jean Louis Guepy will give the 127th Open Championship a Gallic send off at 7.15 this morning. Guepy is no Arnaud Massey, the 1907 champion down the road at Hoylake, and there the French influence may end. Whether a British influence will prevail at Birkdale for the first time is in the hands of the assorted trio of Nick Faldo, Colin Montgomerie and Lee Westwood.

Each represents faith, hope and expectation. Faldo's faith has had to be of the blind variety as he battles to overcome the elbow injury that struck him down at Loch Lomond last week and it is not one shared by the bookmakers as they marked the three-time champion down to 50-1.

"I feel a lot better than a 50-1 shot," Faldo protested. "My arm is doing great. I played a proper round today and didn't hold back on anything."

The injury may even prove a blessing in disguise. Faldo will at least be fresh, as the workaholic has hit barely a hundred balls this week. "I normally hit that many in half an hour," he said. His record of missing four cuts in the last six majors is another factor in the lack of faith in a player who has won six majors, but Faldo is not a man to be written off.

"I believe there will be a turnaround in the next couple of months," he said. As for the possibility of winning another major, Faldo spluttered: "Definitely, certainly, no problem." Montgomerie can only hope he will become the 16th successive different winner of a major. His record of only one top-10 finish in eight Opens is not encouraging.

The Scot's policy this week is to stay relaxed. He arrived only on Tuesday afternoon, playing nine holes that day and nine early yesterday morning. All he was looking for was a little rhythm, the rest of the time was for dreaming. "I am a British sportsman and this is the British Open. Obviously this would be the pinnacle of anyone's career."

The expectation lies with Westwood, the 25-year-old who has the hottest winning streak in golf with seven wins in the last nine months. A month ago at San Francisco he recorded his highest ever finish in a major - seventh in the US Open - and the next step is for him to contend for a title.

With five wins in a similar time scale, David Duval is Westwood's equivalent from the States and his has been the name doing the rounds in the caddyshack as a potential win-



Nick Faldo is forced to play his way out of trouble on the second hole during practice at Birkdale yesterday

David Ashdown

ner. The reasons are his ability to work the ball and cope with the windy conditions which are forecast to continue through the championship.

The finest ball-strikers can be expected to come to the fore over the next four days and that means Ernie Els, Tiger Woods and the defending champion, Justin Leonard, must head the contenders. The only doubt about the South African is his dodgy back, while Woods flattered to deceive at Royal Troon.

Woods got backing, however, from Tom Watson, the 1983 champion at Birkdale. "Tiger is going to win a British Open, there is no question," said Watson, who also comes into an older group of contenders which includes Nick Price and Mark O'Meara.

Such is the level of competition these days that players will do anything to get an edge. This year's bid seems to involve clutching at the cliché that says it is advisable to "be wary of the injured golfer". The queues at the physiotherapy unit have been longer than those expected in the Southport area from this morning and Lehman yesterday became the latest to go in search of healing hands.

The American, who won the title two years ago at Lytham, was involved in an incident at a fairs near Southport and appeared in a sling. "I was messing around with the kids," said the 39-year-old father of three. "I have a strain in my right shoulder but I will be fine. I will definitely be playing."

Last year Lehman had to have the odd dent repaired before returning the claret jug. Not so this time. "We took good care of it," Leonard said. This is no less than can be expected of a highly organised 26-year-old. "It was put to good use. We drank champagne from it a few times after I won and a few times more before I had to give it back."

One of the pleasant side-effects of his victory was that he had an Open champion able to give an eloquent speech. He was at it again on Tuesday evening when he received a memento of his win from the Association of Golf Writers. "I don't know what a quiche is," Leonard said. "But I'm sure I will love it. And if I don't, I'm sure my mum will."

He added: "I don't think there is one experience that could describe the last year, how much fun it has been and how much I have learnt. You know, it is not something that's easily put into words."

By a fluke of timing, it was announced yesterday that the first prize at each of the three new World Championship events next year will be a minimum of \$1m (around £625,000). That will dwarf the £300,000 on offer to the winner on Sunday but Sir Michael Bonalack, the secretary of the Royal and Ancient, is unconcerned. "We will continue to advance the prize fund as we have done in the last few years to keep in step with the other major championships, but we will

not be following other events," he said.

There is no need. Westwood would be in line to receive a \$1m bonus if he added a Birkdale triumph to his win at Loch Lomond but says that is immaterial. For the next four days a sport usually driven by economics reverts to a game where glory and a place in history is at stake.

"This is the one I'd dearly like to win and the one I get the most excited about," said Davis Love, the US PGA champion. "This is the oldest and probably the greatest tournament in the world. Each major and each big tournament has got something special, but this is probably the one that most guys would want to win more than any other."

FOUR TO
FLY IN
THE WIND

STEPHEN AMES

Canadian-based player from Trinidad and Tobago. Grandmother was islands' women's champion 20 times. Rookie on US tour, but temporarily denied entry to the States due to passport irregularity. Won 1996 Benson and Hedges International in a gale, ahead of Faldo and Monty.

DARREN CLARKE

Joint first round leader with Jim Furyk a year ago at Troon when wind was up on the opening day. Went on to finish second to Leonard despite, by his own admission, not being at the top of his game. Winner this season at the notoriously windy Oxfordshire in the B&H International. Stoutly-built and can hit ball extremely low.

JUSTIN LEONARD

Distinctive flat swing honed in Texas, which has a history of producing good wind players. Filled with grit and determination, as shown on the opening day last year. Despite playing back nine into a gale, Leonard parred home. Putter polished the job off on Sunday.

IAN WOOSNAM

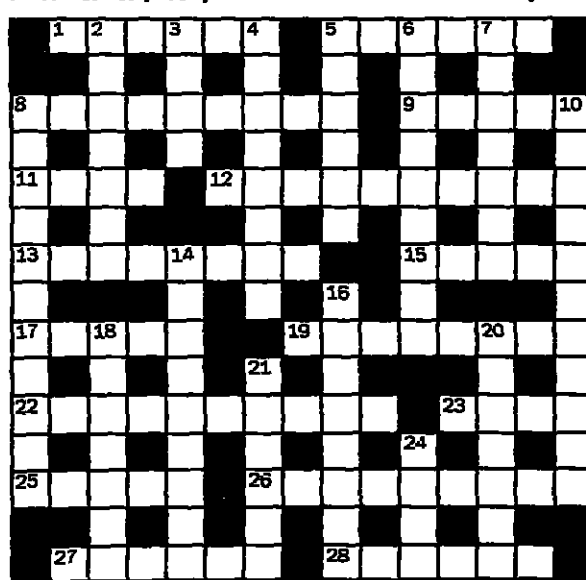
The Welshman's low centre of gravity gives him a natural advantage in the wind. Won the 1996 Scottish Open at Carnoustie when even the locals admitted it was more than breezy. Second at Loch Lomond. Still striking the ball as well as ever, just needs to regain confidence on the greens.

THE THURSDAY CROSSWORD

No. 3664 Thursday 16 July

By Mass

Wednesday's solutions



ESCAPEMENT STEW
AR A O I V E A
ROAST NOCTURNAL
G M E T I N G
RIPON EASYGOING
U E Y M A E N
MADAM BUTTERFLY
S E E A
WILDCAT STRIKES
G N I I A N B
RECOGNISE GROVE
A U T O C L I T
P O M O N A I S D I N O
E G E S S O N O
S E E M P E R S O N A G E S

- ACROSS**
- Composed and produced a hit (6)
 - Faction or branch of society (6)
 - Battling in metal suit - the best imaginable (9)
 - Left German's house (5)
 - Order to march (4)
 - Tentative cutting round edges of drape (10)
 - Do up or do over; neat (8)
 - Relation wearing green, mostly (2-3)
 - Drive and spirit shown by the Spanish (5)
 - Icons are destroyed in sequence of events (8)
 - Commotion in port?

- DOWN**
- Seaman's almost indifferent (10)
 - Bird endlessly circling hill (4)
 - Duck beginning to develop comb (5)
 - Keen about trendy English property (9)
 - Admonition for minor getting drunk (6)
 - Skillful former forward (6)
 - Spanish language finds family group inwardly at one (7)
 - Sheep initially prepared for clip (4)
 - Set off for college in time (8)

- It's understood country's 500 for ten (6)
- Officer, eminent one, is in pile-up (8)
- How testing! (2, 5)
- A French vessel trawled around, without tackle (11)
- Very flowery on edge (11)
- Countryfolk almost depraved on drinks (9)
- Search for sponge (8)
- Attendant's carrying wrong sack (7)
- One in a stag party? (2-4)
- Amount of brass advanced (6)
- Best dressing for river fish (4)

Kanchelskis joins the Ibrox influx

BY ALAN NIXON
AND PHIL SHAW

ANDREI KANCHELSKIS returned to British football yesterday when Rangers broke the Scottish transfer record to sign the former Manchester United and Everton winger for £5.5m.

The 29-year-old Ukrainian becomes new coach Dick Advocaat's fifth summer signing and takes the Ibrox club's spending over £20m. Kanchelskis, who spent nearly two years in Italy with Fiorentina after leaving Everton, has signed a four-year contract.

It is the third time Rangers have spent over £5m on a player this summer after the acquisitions of the Netherlands' international duo Artur Numan and Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

Kanchelskis' signing is a major coup for the club and will fill the creative void left by the departures of Paul Gascoigne and Brian Laudrup.

"I am very happy to be in Glasgow," Kanchelskis said yesterday. "I think Rangers are one of the best (teams) in Europe and the coach and the chairman were both very keen for me to sign."

Rangers' UEFA Cup match with the Irish team Shelbourne in Dublin has been called off on safety grounds. The first-round, first-leg tie was due have gone ahead at Dublin's Tolka Park stadium next Wednesday, but it has been postponed due to

problems with safety and security.

The former Rangers and current Everton manager, Walter Smith, is hoping to bring David Unsworth back from West Ham. Smith has spoken to the Hammers about the unsettled Unsworth, who wants to return to the North-West for family reasons. Smith is willing to pay £1.5m for Unsworth and would be interested in throwing players into an exchange deal.

Everton, meanwhile, completed the signing of the Italian centre-half, Marco Materazzi, from Perugia for £3m yesterday. The Blackburn striker, Kevin Gallacher, could miss the start of the season after having a hernia operation. Gallacher is the fourth Blackburn player to undergo an operation this summer, following midfielder Billy McKinlay and wingers Jason Wilcox and Damien Duff.

First Division Barnsley have signed Derby's club captain, Robin Van der Laan, for £325,000. Van der Laan, 29, became Jim Smith's first signing for the Rams in the summer of 1995 when he joined from Port Vale for £750,000. Smith immediately made him captain and he led the side into the top flight in his first season. Van der Laan's appearances were hampered last season by an ankle injury.

The Tottenham manager, Christian Gross, is ready to make Ipswich's Argentinian full-back Mauricio Tarrico his first summer signing in a deal worth around £2m. Tarrico, who can play on either flank,

was one of Ipswich's stars in their run to the promotion play-off stages last season.

James Kelly, the former Wolves midfielder who received a five-year prison sentence for manslaughter in 1996, has signed for Huddersfield Town on his release. The Vauxhall Conference club's manager, John Baldwin, described the 24-year-old Merseysider as "a quality player". Kelly was jailed after the death of a man following an argument at a wedding reception.

Liverpool took a step closer to signing Norwegian defender Vegard Heggem yesterday when they agreed a fee with his club Rosenborg. The highly regarded 22-year-old is due at Anfield on Monday to discuss personal terms and should be a Liverpool player soon after that. Liverpool refused to confirm the fee, but it is believed to be £3m. Heggem missed the World Cup because of injury but he has since recovered and is back playing.

The former Liverpool caretaker manager Ronnie Moran is to retire after almost 50 years' service at Anfield. Moran joined the Reds after leaving school in July 1949 and played 379 times for the club before joining the coaching staff. He served as caretaker manager following Kenny Dalglish's departure in 1991. Dalglish, now the manager at Newcastle United, yesterday recruited the former St James' Park player, Tommy Craig, to the Magpies' coaching staff.

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THURSDAY REVIEW

COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • LISTINGS • TELEVISION

Shooting up

Profits are at an all-time high, supplies are plentiful and the customers are not only satisfied, they're hooked. The illegal drugs industry has never had it so good. As this chilling 'company report', leaked to *The Independent* from the headquarters of Drugs (UK) plc, reveals...

BY PAUL LASHMAR

AS CHAIRMAN of the board of Drugs (UK) plc I am pleased to report to our directors and shareholders record sales last year. Our core business remains the importation, distribution and retail of illegal drugs.

The overall value of our industry is, by its nature, hard to gauge. But for the first time our own estimates have been confirmed by official figures suggesting that we now have a turnover worth up to £10bn a year. The Office of National Statistics report issued last week said that this reflects up to 2.5 per cent of all consumer spending.

Our turnover, which I think you will agree is impressive, is almost comparable with the British wine and spirit industry's £12bn per year. As you can see from our profit and loss account, we have provided exceptional return on your venture capital.

Market penetration of all our products has increased over the last year in all demographic and geographic areas. About 48 per cent of 16-24-year-olds now say that they have used illegal drugs, an increase of 3 per cent on 1994. There remains a great scope for expansion. Only one-fifth of those who have used our products are regular purchasers.

We have made strenuous efforts to break away from our traditional inner city urban image and are breaking into new regions, especially in rural areas. Confirmation of our success came from the independent commentator on the drugs market, "drugs tsar" Keith Hellawell, last week: "Traditionally addicts came from broken homes, or deprived backgrounds. We are now getting a new group, people from the more affluent rural areas. They are often high achievers from stable homes, and they are becoming addicted to drugs."

In a year of notable successes, first I must congratulate our employees in the heroin subsidiary for their strenuous efforts to expand the downstream business. As our long-term investors will know, this sector has mainly supplied a small but dedicated group of high spending consumers. Official estimates suggest 40,000 registered users and a maximum of 160,000 regular purchasers.

As a result of innovative marketing strategies, we have increased our consumer base at the rate of some 20 per cent per annum. We have been able to improve supply of this drug and to continue a 10-year trend of price-cutting to expand our customer base. We are currently watching with interest new, localised schemes building on this success.

Our sales team are encouraging inhalation of heroin, as this has shown to have a better image than mainline methods. Our new strategy of packaging in special cheap £2 "one hit wonders" appears to be highly effective in attracting the youth market. In some areas we supplied heroin to the school age market at below retail cost. This "loss leader" scheme is designed to give early exposure to our products to potential long-term consumers.

Although the price of heroin has dropped in recent years from £90 a gram to £45 a gram, the profit margin remains high. We have also been able to increase the purity of our products at street level. As in previous years, heroin produces a high and sustained return on investment.

Our cocaine subsidiary has had a buoyant year. Growth has been gradual and times have changed from the late Eighties where our City business experienced a boom period. Our white powder is primarily an upmarket product, and we hope to hold sales steady through the anticipated recession.

Purchases of crack cocaine, our

product targeted at a lower socio-economic target group, have outstripped those of the classic powder product. Market research shows that our 173,000 regular cocaine consumers spend an average of £780 per annum on this drug. However, dedicated users spend up to £20,000 per year, far greater expenditure than on any of our other products. We also have a large "impulse buy" market for this product.

Cannabis remains our biggest-selling brand. Our core group is some 1.73 million regular customers and each is estimated to spend some £600 a year on our cannabis range. Market research shows that one in three 14-15-year-olds have sampled at least one product from this range, and that 70 per cent of this age group know one of our sales representatives. We have maintained prices at around £3.50 a gram. Cannabis presents a difficult import challenge due to its bulk compared with class A drugs. It takes around 70 tonnes a year to supply our current client base.

Our cannabis and synthetic drug division has kept up its close contacts with Holland, which leads the world in state-of-the-art exportation techniques. Our Dutch colleagues have expanded operations and continue to develop the manufacturing base for our synthetic products.

The most important of these synthetic brands, ecstasy, continues to sell well, although it has never quite lived up to the promise of late Eighties. We believe the problem with this product is user tolerance which, while temporarily increasing sales, deters long-term use. Our chemists are working with our Dutch colleagues in the research and development division and are looking for a new product range that overcomes this problem.

I welcome the extension of the European Community. Reducing border controls has expedited shipments and reduced bureaucracy. Recent experience has shown that the Channel Tunnel is an efficient route for importation if not overused.

The upheaval in eastern Europe has opened a variety of new trade routes. In addition we have an extensive recruiting strategy in the former Communist countries. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Romanian and Czech colleagues.

One note of caution. The biggest current threat to our business is the mounting number of health scares associated with our brands. We have for many years been able to present cannabis as totally harmless. Recent research has caused worries and has deterred some casual consumers.

Ours is always a high-risk industry. Seizures by Customs and police have increased, but we feel this reflects the continuing expansion of our import arm. According to the latest figures released yesterday, Customs last year seized our products to the value of £3.3bn between 1997 and 1998, including 1.7 tonnes of heroin.

In January, Scotland Yard claimed that they had "seriously disrupted" supplies of heroin by knocking out a distribution centre in North London. The continuing drop in the price of this product I think speaks for itself.

Customs claimed to have eliminated 130 of our import and distribution franchises. Sadly, this is an occupational hazard of our business. Drugs (UK) plc's Liverpool area manager, Curtis Warren, 34, noted for his aggressive leadership style, has moved to new pastures. While overseeing a shipment from Holland, the Dutch police recognised his innate organising talents and the Netherlands prison service made him an offer he could not decline for a 12-year contract.

David Santini, 31, who had made a similar impact as our main heroin distributor in Scotland, has received a 13-year contract from the British Prisons Service.

In the UK, heroin deaths rose from 52 to 186 in three years. We regret the loss of such regular customers. I also deplore the increase in the use of firearms that has, unfortunately become synonymous with our business. This damages our corporate image and attracts excessive interest from the police. Some 95,000 of our workers and customers were arrested in 1996, up from 86,000 in 1994.

Drugs (UK) plc business has also contributed to our allied industries, theft and prostitution. One recent report suggested that just 664 of our regular heroin purchasers had been involved in some 70,000 theft offences in a three-month period.

On the broader front it has been an eventful year. Regarding legalisation, we were troubled by the campaign run by a national newspaper and the increasing number of police officers and other prominent figures who favour the legalisation of cannabis.

As I have pointed out in the past, legalisation presents a threat to our control over the industry. We believe we provide an exemplary 24-hour "drugs direct" service with no expensive headquarters or showrooms, no advertising, no tax - just personal contact with our extensive network of salesmen.

We were initially concerned at the arrival of a new government, especially one that included some members who had personal past knowledge of our product range. Worries that it might precipitate a radical change of policy proved groundless. We lobbied to encourage the Government to maintain the tradition al "war on drugs" position. I am glad to say that both the Prime Minister, Tony Blair and Home Secretary have continued to support this hard-line stance.

I emphasised to the Government our commitment to the one truly free market. I also feel we have entered into the spirit of Labour's "New Deal" by providing employment for many considered unemployable in mainstream business.

On the negative side the Government appointed a "drug tsar" in October. This was followed in March by a considered "White Paper" policy document that moved away from the political hyperbole we have seen in the past. However, despite a number of well considered suggestions I do not envisage any substantive impact on our business.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Chancellor for increasing the taxation on alcohol and tobacco. This has meant our products can provide more "bang for the buck", compared to the cost of a pint of bitter or a glass of wine. This has been a major incentive for our customers among the young and unemployed.

For politicians who take a high moral tone on our trade I would draw attention to the report by a leading expert, Rowan Bosworth-Davis, who says that the flow of drugs money from the indebted Third World countries is helping to keep the Western banking system afloat. He estimates that by 2004 the value of the drugs fund world-wide will be £1,500 bn (£937bn) – equal to the value of the world's stock of gold.

Prospects for the next five-year period look promising. We should continue to trade on our image as a leisure industry service provider. While we cannot afford to be complacent in a fast changing market, we see nothing on the horizon that poses a serious threat to maintaining and developing our trade for the foreseeable future.

INSIDE	Letters	2	Features	8-9	Fast Track	17-20	Radio	23
	Leaders and comment	3-5	Arts	10	Listings	21-22	Games	23
	Obituaries	6-7	Film	11-16	Satellite	23	Today's TV	24

EDUCATION

Laughter in the shadows

ACCORDING to one review of Jerry Seinfeld's appearance at the London Palladium the other day, the American comedian invited the audience to name subjects for him to comment on. "Drumcree!" shouted someone.

He blushed. Well, he said, as far as he understood the situation, he gathered the Orange Order commemorated some battle fought 200 years ago. He said he had news for the Orange Order. "The game's over, fellows!" Everyone cheered. But I don't expect many people laughed. There is a perfectly simple reason for this, and it is nothing to do with murders and deaths and the Quinn family. The reason that comedians don't do jokes about Orangemen is that it is hard to be funny about something which is laughable already.



MILES KINGSTON

The devil doesn't just have all the best tunes, he has the best jokes too

George Mikes once said that no subject should be safe from humour, but he was wrong. There is an exception. You should never try to be funny about something which is funny already, and high on the list of things that are destined to be ridiculous is a line of bowler-hatted bigots marching backwards through history to the sound of bad Boy Scout music and thinking how grand they are.

Oh, you hear people making occasional jokes about the Orange marching season to the effect that this seems a lot of fuss to make about one mobile phone company, but their hearts are plainly not in it. I have heard Dublin comedians try to make capital out of the Orange marches. You know what the Catholics should do when the marchers come through their area? one comedian asked. They should march with them! Bring their own bands! Join in and make a real party of it! (He had a good point there. But it wasn't that funny.)

So, if comedians don't like to be funny about the funny side of life and can't get laughs out of it, what do they like to be funny about? The other side, of course. The sad and doomed side of our nature.

People make jokes about death and disease, sex and madness, poverty and privation. They make jokes about arrogance and intolerance,

race and gender, injury and humiliation, drunkenness and failure. What they don't make jokes about are the really nice things in life which is why there are lots of jokes about sex and very few jokes about love. The devil doesn't just have all the best tunes; he has the best jokes, too.

If you don't agree that we like to laugh at the dark side of life, you only have to think of one of the funniest TV series of recent times, *Blackadder*, the canonisation of the cad. The central figure was the personification of cowardice, lust, dishonesty, cruelty, greed and almost any base motive you care to think of. It was almost always incredibly funny. And *Blackadder* is only the most recent in a long line of men behaving badly in history.

If you don't remember Squire Haggard, the wonderfully foul-mouthed, ruthless and murderous 18th-century comic villain dreamt up by Michael Green, then you only have to think of *Flanagan*, the wonderfully lascivious coward made flesh by George MacDonald Fraser. My favourite character from all the characters invented by Beaumont Newhall was Captain Foulmouth, who was the most dastardly of society scoundrels and who even taught his son to cheat efficiently at cards, leading to the immortal pronouncement during a poker game: "Father, that is not the hand I dealt you!"

You can, of course, try to get humour out of goodness. But you won't get very far. Father Ted was a comedy based on three Catholic priests living together in the same house. There weren't many laughs based on the saving of souls. The humour came from such priestly attributes as drunkenness, lechery, violence, greed, naked ambition, stupidity and hatred. And wonderfully funny it all was, too.

To give Catholics their due, the best anti-Catholic jokes have always been told by Catholics. It is, however, very difficult to imagine Orangemen sitting around after a hard day's marching, telling anti-Orange jokes to each other. Their humourlessness is one of the things that make them so risible in the first place.

To be honest, the only real mark that the Orange order is ever going to make on the world of comedy is in cartoons. For a century or more, when a cartoonist drew a man with a bowler, you knew it was meant to be an Englishman, just as a man with a beret was meant to be French. No more. If you now drew a man with a bowler, people would think it was meant to be an Orangeman.

Which means that men with bowlers may vanish altogether from cartoons. For who would want to draw an Orangeman, and then have to think of something funny to say about him?



In the fourth of our series on Battersea Dogs Home, staff prepare to cut away the padlock and chain around the neck of an anxious-looking new arrival.

Tom Pilston

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Spend and tax

Sir: On 9 April 1997 you were good enough to publish my letter commenting on Labour's manifesto commitment to increase education spending as a proportion of GDP via a reduction in social security spending as a proportion of GDP over the course of their first five-year term.

The essential conclusion in my letter was that it would not prove possible to reduce social security spending as a proportion of GDP and that any increase in expenditure on education a proportion of GDP would have to be met out of increased taxation. Now that the Treasury have published their tax and public spending projections for the whole of the current parliament, it is possible to review the position in detail. The Conservatives' final year of office was 1996/97 and the final year of Labour's first five-year term is likely to be 2001/02.

The Treasury figures, based on the final figures for 1996/97 and the projections for the rest of this parliament, show the following: a) Education spending to increase, as a proportion of GDP, from 4.9 per cent in 1996/97 to 5.2 per cent by 2001/02. b) Social security spending, as a proportion of GDP, to remain roughly constant on a like-for-like basis over the same period at around 12 per cent of GDP. c) Taxation, as a proportion of GDP, to increase on a like-for-like basis from 36 per cent in 1996/97 to 38.4 per cent in 2001/02. Meanwhile a Treasury parliamentary answer dated 22 December 1997 estimates that such an increase is worth an extra £23bn per annum tax revenue by 2001/02 as compared with 1996/97, equivalent to around 10p on the basic rate of income tax.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above figures is that the modest increase in education spending as a proportion of GDP will be paid for out of a significant tax hike, and not out of reduced social security spending. It may be that there is nothing wrong in principle with putting up taxes to increase spending on education; many would argue that it is a sensible investment in the country's future. However, and in the interests of open Government, it would be helpful if the Treasury could confirm that this is indeed what is now planned. M C FITZPATRICK
Head of Economics
Chantrey Villacott
London WC1

Loyalists at bay

Sir: Your editorial and correspondence columns, like the rest of the media, have been filled with anti-Orangemen articles and letters. There has been a marked lack of any attempt to understand their view. It is difficult to see how demonising any section of the community in Northern Ireland is going to help bring about a peaceful and harmonious society there. The Protestants largely see themselves as a threatened minority within greater Ireland, where the

Catholic, nationalist majority, they believe, wishes to destroy the Protestant culture, if not the people. This is why the separate province exists at all.

The Orange perception is that, whenever they make concessions, the other side, instead of reciprocating, simply comes back for more. The English media and British Government seem hell-bent on encouraging them in that view. Consider how it looks to Irish Protestants: they wished to conduct a traditional and legal march. Some nationalists threatened illegal violence against them. The Government responded by making the march illegal. They gave up nine out of ten annual marches at Drumcree, the nationalist community responded by even more vehemently demanding that the one remaining should be given up too. When the Protestants make conciliatory moves, they are treated as being on the run, and the mob howls for more.

Your own letters page is given over not to rational debate but to nit-pickers. They triumphantly produce arguments about the semantics of the term "loyalist", and how many people of which religion died on the Somme, as if these are useful insights that will persuade the Orangemen of the error of their ways. One of them even indulges in a piece of blatant racism, pointing out that the Orangemen are "descendants of Scots planted by the English". Words like these reinforce the most extreme fears, and nationalism is a dream not of a united country but of one cleansed of non-Gaels.

What is desperately needed is a gesture of support for the Orangemen from those they fear. Then they might stop behaving like cornered animals. An offer to lead the march by the Irish President is the kind of thing I have in mind. So long as everyone merely pokes sticks at them they are certain to react by aggressively defending their rights as they see them. C PADLEY
Market Rasen, Lincolnshire

No unkind cut

Sir: As someone who according to Jeremy Laurance's article on Circumcision ("Doctors campaign for end to circumcision", 13 July) does not enjoy my sex life and whose sexual partners find no fulfilment in having sex with me, might I respectfully suggest that they pull their foreskins from over their heads and stop talking such nonsense.

That circumcision should be done by qualified trained practitioners and experienced doctors goes without saying. As regards the child suffering traumatically when operated on as a baby of a week or so, I have always wondered why I personally could raise very little sexual interest in females until I was 12 years old. Now thanks to his article I have now been enlightened.

Circumcision at an early age, as painful and as gory as it may look, is not so painful to the child as it is to the uninitiated observer. The foreskin, just like the appendix or the tonsils, is not an essential organ and

the male is probably better off without it. Its removal can prevent suffering in later years from various illnesses. Partners are less likely to contract cancer of the vagina.

Perhaps those people Jeremy Laurance writes about might serve mankind better if they raised their sights above their loins and concentrated their thoughts on more serious matters. D WARNER
Stammore, Middlesex

Sir: I note in the article "An unkind – and unnecessary – cut" (14 July) that the Board of Deputies of British Jews regards with scepticism the idea of a civil claim for damages from a circumcision. I would say in response, "Watch this space".

Many men like me who have had their lives blighted by this mutilation have been waiting for the chance to pursue litigation and it seems we now have the necessary evidence of damage. PHILIP D SMITH
Stone, Staffordshire

Paedophile risks

Sir: Anne Treneaman's report "A very English lynch mob" (10 July) gave an interesting analysis of the public debate over released paedophiles, but more needs to be said about the dramatic shift in policy towards protecting children instead of waiting until it is too late.

Communities in every area, urban and rural, need protection from the risk posed by sex offenders, and in particular paedophiles. Abusing the trust of children, they ruin childhoods and wreck lives and for this reason I can wholly understand the concerns of residents in Wing about Robert Oliver.

It is imperative, however, that these concerns are not taken out of context and it is understood that for the first time action is being taken in a structured and consistent way by the police, probation and child protection agencies to protect children from identified paedophiles. All sex offenders released from prison must now register their name and address with the police. A national steering group has been set up to oversee their resettlement into the community under suitable supervision.

Paedophiles who are convicted of a second sexual offence now face automatic life imprisonment, ensuring that they can be kept in custody indefinitely if they are assessed as posing a significant risk; the aim is to prevent any second offence.

If an offender's behaviour poses a threat police will be able to apply for a Sex Offender Order to prevent them loitering near playgrounds or schools. Action is also being taken to prevent sex offenders working with children.

We are working with agencies to safeguard children in our communities but those communities must also play their part.

The ill-considered actions and irresponsible behaviour of some parents, however understandable the emotion that makes them fearful for the safety of their children, creates possibly the greatest risk of

all, that of driving paedophiles underground, out of the sight and care of the professionals who are best placed to contain them.

Offender like Robert Oliver and Sidney Cooke cannot be resentenced for their crimes. I fully understand why parents are angry and fearful but they should work with us and not against us to ensure that they do not increase the very danger that they oppose. ALUN MICHAEL
Minister of State
Home Office
London SW1

Good value

Sir: The headline "University chiefs waste £1m" (13 July) regarding the Higher Education Business Enterprises (Hebe) company was highly misleading.

Universities and colleges did not waste money; they actually got good value for their expenditure on Hebe. Each university and college invested £5,000 and these funds helped develop a number of initiatives. These included a CD-Rom on undergraduate courses, directories of postgraduate courses, and course fairs, all of which are still run successfully today by other agencies.

At the time that Hebe was established the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) and the Standing Conference of Principals (Scop) hoped that these loans would be repaid with profit. The recession and increased competition nationally, however, meant that the careers fairs did not attract sufficient commercial interest and had to be subsidised by Hebe. The fairs, now run by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, continue to be supported by universities and college subscriptions at approximately the same level, as they are an important way of getting information about courses to potential students.

Hebe is now being wound up, but its accounts are published and are available to inspect. They were not included in CVCP's 1996/97 accounts as the winding up process meant that it was not possible to prepare them in time. DIANA WARWICK
Chief Executive, CVCP
London WC1

Blame for heroin

Sir: Your report on the rapid escalation of heroin use among teenagers (13 July) is disturbing but not surprising, as this is what drug agency workers have been consistently reporting for the last few years.

Unfortunately, this trend is likely to continue given the Government's dogmatic refusal to accept that this problem is entirely of its own making. For it is Tony Blair, Jack Straw and Keith Hellawell, the drug "tsar", who are compounding the heroin problem by their refusal to separate heroin from the cannabis market.

Amsterdam once had a heroin problem so serious it forced the authorities to look at radical solutions. The two drug markets

have been separated by legalising the sale of cannabis. Result? The average age of heroin addicts in Holland is 35 and rising each year, with fewer teenagers using the drug. In Britain the average age of heroin addicts is 25 and likely to fall as many new smokers of the drug become hooked. KEVIN WILLIAMSON
Amsterdam

End of term

Sir: I once taught in an independent school in Birmingham which neatly solved the problem of the last three weeks of term. ("Where did the rest of the term go?", 8 July). The entire school moved up a year and began the next year's syllabus. Pupils changed classrooms and lockers, were issued with the following year's books, got to know their new teachers and made a start on the following year's work. Needless to say, their exam results were brilliant. ANNE SIMONS
Cardiff

Sir: Joanna Williams's letter (13 July) takes me back thirty years to when I was a careers master in Kingston upon Thames. We too had the problem of the post-examination hiatus, which we tried to solve by a pre-sixth form "taster" course. I endeavoured to persuade the young gentlemen that persistence with schooling would be beneficial and enjoyable. I brought my campaign to halt when one of my students gave a judgement. He said, "You can offer me wine, women and song, but it's still bloody school, isn't it?" ELLIS BERG
Selsey, West Sussex

IN BRIEF

Sir: Steven Norris (interview, 13 July) says "people... still expect their Tesco to stock seven kinds of lettuce" hence the need for "lorries hurtling down their roads". Here in Sheffield Tesco has built a supermarket which is matched on the other side of the main-line railway by a Sainsbury's supermarket. Why can't they both bring their goods by train? Modern containers can be transferred in minutes from freight wagons. ADRIAN PADFIELD
Sheffield

Sir: It appears that Piers Morgan (Letters, 15 July) does not quite understand about faxes: surely people send faxes rather than letters for the very reason that they do want others than the addressee to read the contents. BRIAN MOORE
Exeter

Sir: Is there perhaps a new maxim: "I'll walk over burning coals before I'll miss-sell a life insurance policy"? PHILIP ISHERWOOD
Leigh

Sir: Could the new paternity test by post (report, 14 July) be the answer to Roy Tucker's dreams? CHRIS MOORHOUSE
Sheffield

THE REVIEW DAY BY DAY

MONDAY REVIEW

As well as our regular columns, features and expanded comment pages, Network, our information technology section, moves to Monday.

TUESDAY REVIEW

An improved media section, with appointments, moves to Tuesday. Visual arts and more health pages are also Tuesday regulars

WEDNESDAY REVIEW

Fashion, midweek money pages, in addition to finance and secretarial sections (previously City+) will stay on Wednesday

THURSDAY REVIEW

Our education section will appear as a separate tabloid section. Improved and expanded film pages now move to Thursday

FRIDAY REVIEW

The architecture and science pages now move to Friday. In addition, we will have a new law section and our music pages

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Don't waste the NHS bonus on political gimmicks

YES, IT'S extra money. Yes, it is needed. But no, it is not the answer to all the NHS's problems. When Frank Dobson stands up in the Commons this afternoon to give the details behind Gordon Brown's statement on Wednesday, he will deservedly have a smile on his face. The figure of an extra £21bn may well be an "outrageous fiddle" as Ann Widdecombe describes it (the Government have counted the increase from 1998-99 four times over). But even after allowing for inflation, it marks a 4.7 per cent increase in spending over the next three years, and the Government can justifiably claim to have more than met expectations.

Nothing, however, should be taken at face value in the NHS. For one thing, the Government's extra spending does not even come close to the 5.6 per cent annual increases that the Conservatives managed in the early 1990s. For all the good it did them politically, the last government could hold its head up high on its commitment to the NHS. Far from starving the service, it consistently ploughed money into it. And thereby hangs the problem. The NHS eats money. A financially ravenous mix of technological advances, demographic change, ever increasing demand and increasing expectations - let alone pay - means that the NHS will always struggle to meet the demands we place upon it. It is a basic law of economics that demand for any good provided free will always exceed supply.

Funding the service, of course, is to a large degree a matter of will. But there is a grave danger that Mr Dobson's extra money will be frittered away on a ludicrous piece of political grandstanding. When Labour was in opposition, attacking the Conservatives over waiting lists was an easy target. And how often they took aim! But rather than simply using the figures to make political capital, which would have been cheap but understandable, the party decided to make the reduction in waiting lists a key election pledge: vote Labour and see waiting lists fall by 100,000. Except, of course, that they have not. They have risen by 137,000.

Ah, but it was not an "early pledge", we are now told. It was due to be met only in the lifetime of this Parliament. Put this interesting interpretation of apparently clear language aside. Even to meet the pledge on its own terms, the Government will now have to secure a fall of 3,000 a week in the list. To do this, it has already allocated £385m, and this afternoon Mr Dobson will tell us how much more money is to be thrown at the prob-



lem. The Government has even appointed a "waiting list tsar", Peter Homa, chief executive of the Leicester Royal Infirmary.

A less thought-through, more superficial and wasteful commitment would be hard to find. Waiting lists are often a sign not of failure but success. Imagine that the same idea were applied to a supermarket. Dobson and Co opens its first shop in London. Within days, its floors are bursting with shoppers and its 10 check-outs are always full. So successful is it that Frank, the genial owner, decides to open another store. Again, it is a huge success and its 10 check-outs are always busy. The story

continues with each new shop. Overall, many more people are being served at Dobson and Co. But there are also many more people queuing for its services because there are many more tills.

That is exactly what is happening in the NHS. It has been little noticed that, for all that waiting lists are constantly rising, in the first three months of this year the NHS treated more people than ever before. That is the real measure of the NHS's productivity. The extra money announced on Wednesday is welcome, and could make a real difference. But please, Mr Dobson, stop this stupid obsession with waiting lists.

A lingering whiff of croneyism

SO NOW we know, Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, is squeaky clean. That is a relief. According to the House of Commons Standards Committee, Mr Robinson is guilty of not meeting "all the requirements of registration", but his conduct does not meet the "threshold" required for action to be taken against him. And this, we are told, means that we can all breathe easily again in the knowledge that the Government is indeed "purer than pure", as the Prime Minister put it last week.

This will not do. What is most noticeable about the first 14 months of Labour government? A pious tone accompanied by a series of worrying events. Bernie Ecclestone's £1m, Mohammed Sarwar's alleged election bribes, last week's furore over croneyism and Mr Robinson's various embarrassments, have all undermined the hope the Government began with - of appearing, if not really being, different. When Mr Blair took to the airwaves yesterday and spoke up for Mr Robinson, and when he apologised last year for the Ecclestone affair, he so desperately wanted us to believe that he was different. Maybe he is. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to trust him, at least in this area.

Mr Robinson has now been cleared by his peers and Mr Blair will no doubt use the forthcoming reshuffle to give him a gentle push towards a less contentious role. But Mr Blair is still faced with a problem. It is easy for a government to gain a bad reputation, and almost impossible then to regain a good one. In today's climate he is right to talk of being "purer than pure". But words are cheap. By allowing the Robinson affair to fester, the Prime Minister showed a worrying lack of judgement. After the past fortnight he may have learned his lesson. If he has not, the next few years are likely to be traumatic for him and his ministers.

Schadenfreude?

THE GERMAN constitutional court has spoken. From now on, it is not Ketchup but Ketschup. Leave aside the sneers at so gloriously German an idea as going to court over language. Perhaps there are some lessons we should learn. What about a prison sentence for saying "gobsmacked", a fine for confusing "disinterested" with "uninterested" and a community service order for following "these" with "ones"?

Why am I so nervous now Labour has delivered on its promises?

SHH! KEEP your voice down. William Hague is listening to Britain, and he could do without a whole lot of *Independent* readers making their usual cacophonous racket. Besides, he knows only too well that listening is a bad sign in a politician, and only done in extremis. Politicians are in business to do things that they think are necessary, not to wander around 'the place listening.

The £250,000 listening campaign launched on Tuesday is, of course, what psychiatrists call a displacement activity, given that the Conservatives' sophisticated polling and their focus groups are telling them exactly what the electorate thinks. So unless the Tories have suddenly decided to take on the mantle of the Samaritans ("Depressed? Suicidal? So we're"), there can be only three possible objectives to their spending a year trolling round the country with their lugholes artificially distended.

The first is to buy time, during which they have an excuse for not coming up with any policies precisely because they are listening. The second (and this was Neil Kinnock's principal motive in his Labour Listens campaign of the mid-Eighties) is to confront recalcitrant party colleagues with the harsh realities of public perception. And the third is just to have something, anything, to do.

There is, by the way, nothing in it for the listener. Being heartened to by, say, Peter Lilley may have the edge over being talked to by Peter Lilley but is, if anything, even more futile.

But let me speculate about something that the peripatetic listeners from Central Office will not hear in the

next few weeks, whether they be open-eared in the snug bar of the Admiral Benbow or piggy-backing the Tweedshire Horticultural Association's Summer Fair. They will not hear anyone say, "the trouble with that there Gordon Brown is that he ain't prudent enough. One nasty downturn in the international economy, and all his fine plans for hospitals and schools and stuff will be down the Swanee. He should have been meaner."

Indeed, that's not what Tony Blair heard either when he faced the callers on yesterday's Nicky Campbell phone-in show on Radio 5 Live. In the wake of Tuesday's Spending Review announcements, those callers deemed critical enough to be chosen from among those jamming the switchboard were all worried that there was insufficient cash going to teachers, nurses and other deserving cases.

True, one had his question re-framed for him so that he appeared to be worried about the chancellor's pre-election give-away, but in light of the fact that we are only 14 months into this government, this criticism seemed a little far-fetched.

Nevertheless, the shadow Chancellor, Francis Maude (soon to be seen listening somewhere near you) attacked the government for "spending its way into a recession". His implication was that there should not be all this extra money for services sloshing around when there were still important taxes to cut.

This sat uneasily with David Willetts' assertion that the Labour money was mere bagatelle compared with what the Tories had thrown at the education service in recent times. So



DAVID AARONOVITCH
This is a moment of opportunity but I wonder about all this money being squandered

miserly did Mr Maude seem that my daughters have become convinced that he is really called Frances Maude, and that he is Pollyanna's mean-spirited cousin.

For months I have been telling anyone who cared to listen (this was before Mr Hague's campaign) that that nice Tony Blair and his sidekick, the Reverend Brown, would put lots of money into the health and education systems, and that this - as well as being a good thing - would be the decisive issue at the next election. It is what Middle England really voted for. It is what Labour promised. And lo!

And lo. So why is it that I am suddenly feeling so nervous? I have been given the thing that I wanted, and yet I am wondering whether I quite deserve it.

It's a bit like nagging your Mum and

Dad all year for a new, expensive bike for Christmas. Yes, you know that things are toughish at the moment, but just think what possession of this coveted item will mean: savings on bus fares, lots of healthy exercise, social acceptance and (naturally) an enhanced willingness to help with the household chores and to complete homework. Christmas comes, and the bike is unwrapped, and - instantly - joy is mixed with apprehension. Was it wise to accede to your requests? Was it prudent?

I am not talking here about what would happen to the spending plans in the event of an economic downturn. Mr Blair assures us that he has cut himself some slack should growth fail to meet projections, and that he sees no reason why there should be a recession. I am not an economist so I am not sure which of the competing opinions I should accept.

In general, however, I am convinced that we do not need any further income tax reductions for main rate and high-income taxpayers, and that our future as a trading nation would be best served by providing our kids and our workers with the best education and training that we can manage. At the moment I take this also to be the feeling of the nation. Moments of convergence between myself and the nation happen rarely, and I celebrate them when they occur.

But this is a moment of opportunity, and I worry about it's being squandered. Just because you pump the money in doesn't mean that those who get it will use it wisely. No one among Camden council taxpayers voted to spend a million quid of this year's bud-

get on financing a ridiculous spat, before an industrial tribunal, between the council's chief executive and his deputy - a battle of egos that should have cost the price of two cappuccinos to sort out. But that is where the money went and, one day soon, I hope to be able to tell you the full story.

And no one decided that £100 million of public funds would be usefully expended on Scotland Yard's sick bill. Yet the Commons Public Accounts Committee discovered that the average Met copper took three weeks sick leave a year, and that the fight against crime is in danger of being set back by this absenteeism.

Getting money is one thing; using it well is another. Will all the money earmarked for schools be banded over by councils? And if it is, is the government sure that the best way for it to be spent in each and every school is on reducing class sizes? Might there not be a case, in schools facing particular staff recruitment and retention problems, for diverting the cash towards taking on better teachers and allowing a class or two to be 32 or 33 rather than 30?

Yes, I know what the Government pledged. It pledged the same thing over NHS waiting lists, but could that £21 billion be more effectively spent improving outcomes for cancer patients, to say, American levels, rather than targeting waiting lists?

I say pledge, schmedge. The important thing is better education, better health. Lets keep re-evaluating what that means, and let us use this once-in-an-epoch opportunity to achieve it. Hey! Is anyone listening? No, William, sorry. I didn't mean you.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"He is, and remains, my closest personal and political friend in politics, and always will be."
Tony Blair, Prime Minister, commenting on claims of a rift with Gordon Brown

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be breakthrough."
RD Laing, Scottish psychiatrist

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ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD
The continuing political and economic crises in Japan



neglect of larger forces at work in the world. The decision by Ryutaro Hashimoto to take the blame for the electoral setback suffered by Japan's ruling LDP in Sunday's upper house election and so to resign as Prime Minister, is a case in

point. Mr Hashimoto could have moved earlier in his two years as Prime Minister to put the Japanese economy - and the engine of much of Asia's prosperity - back on track. When he did move, it could have been more decisively.

Trying to pursue structural reform, eliminate trade barriers or stimulate domestic demand can be like trying to make water flow uphill. That is one reason why Japan is about to have its tenth prime minister in nine years.
Sydney Morning Herald

"IN ORDINARY times, the fall of yet another Japanese prime minister would not be such big news. But these are not ordinary times. If Japan fails to recover, it will drag much of Asia down the tube and also rattle economies as far afield as Rus-

sia, Chile and Brazil. Already, the low value of the yen and the corresponding decline in consumer spending is hurting exporters around the globe. Despite active intervention, the yen remains weak and listless. Thus, the world anxiously waits to see what concrete steps Mr Hashimoto's successor will take. The options, of course, are limited and will have to include sweeping bank reforms and a reflationary package.

Failure will cost Japan and the world dearly."
The Times of India

"THERE IS considerable concern in some quarters that if the nation's slumping economy is not put back on track, it could spark another Asian currency crisis, and perhaps even a global business slump. It is crucial, in any case, that a new administration be formed as soon as possible so that a political vacuum can be avoided.

The Hashimoto Cabinet is already a lame-duck Cabinet. If the ruling Liberal Democrat Party (LDP) were to wait for the terms of incumbent upper-house members to expire, the Cabinet would probably be un-

able to cope with any new banking crisis that may occur, either at home or abroad, in the two weeks that it has left.

No one can tell, of course, when the next crisis will occur. A fundamental aspect of crisis management, however, is always to be prepared for emergencies.

For this reason, a new administration must be set up immediately.
Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan

"JAPANESE CULTURE places a high premium on individual responsibility, at times to the

PANDORA

MICHAEL OWEN'S achievements during the World Cup are to be honoured in his North Wales home town. The village council in Hawarden has decided to present the 18-year-old footballer with an inscribed rose bowl. One idea was to make the presentation on the same day as the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the village's last great star on the world stage: Gladstone. But this idea was scotched, says Noel Barnes, a local council member, because "Michael wouldn't thank us for making a fuss". How very un-Brazilian of the young man who, for Pandora's money, is now the world's most exciting striker. Ronaldo he's not, thank God.

The Financial Times has been enjoying a wonderful string of surprisingly well informed Treasury-related scoops in recent months. At first glance, this winning streak is a bit surprising, as Gordon Brown is said to disdain the FT's economics editor, Robert Choate. However, on second glance, most of these stories come under the byline of Robert Peston, the FT's political editor. Peston, of course, is still friendly with his former FT colleague Ed Balls, the so-called "deputy Chancellor". According to Derek Draper in Tuesday's Telegraph, Balls "actively courts the press" and "does not make mistakes". Neither, it seems, does Peston these days.

AFTER MONTHS of controversy and film industry rejection, Adrian Lyne's glossy version of *Lolita* has finally found a US theatrical distributor: the Samuel Goldwyn Company. However, it will first reach a US audience on 2 August via the cable network Showtime. Meanwhile, in the UK, the film, which opened at the start of May, has proved a box office dud. It is currently on view in just 15 cinemas nationwide, and has grossed only £400,000. One thing is certain: its producers cannot blame the film's star, Jeremy Irons (right), for its poor showing. Not only did he turn in a brilliant performance as Humbert Humbert, he worked his heart out publicising the film before its release.

FOLLOWING HIS wishy-washy policy statement last week to the Anti-Ruckus Campaign, Lord Archer demonstrates that he will in fact take a strong stand on those issues he deems worthy. "I was sorry to hear of the threat of closure of sea front toilets in Weston," he has written to a group fighting

North Somerset Council's recent development plans, "and I agree it is important there are adequate facilities available for visitors to the town. Perhaps, faced with overwhelming local support, the council might look again at its proposal. I wish you every success with your campaign." London's rucksack victims would have welcomed the same kind of support from the noble lord, but it was not to be. Never mind: we wish Weston's sea-front toilet campaigners every success.

AFTERSHOCKS ARE still being felt from this year's Spectator summer party. The editor, Frank Johnson, has told the publisher, Kimberly Fortier, and the deputy editor, Petronella Wyatt, that this year's event lacked enough pretty girls. "He accused Petronella and me of crossing their names off the invitation list," Fortier told Pandora. "I told him the problem wasn't a shortage of pretty girls. The problem was too many ugly men. It only takes one ugly man to eclipse 10 pretty girls at a party."

UNWITTINGLY, THE Anti-Ruckus Campaign has turned over a hornet's nest as a result of publishing Trevor Phillips's statement: "A lot of people, particularly Australians, aren't used to the culture of courtesy." Letters and faxes have been arriving since last Friday from the sons and daughters of Oz. They are "astonished" and "outraged" by Phillips's "snide, racist" comment and ask whether Phillips, who is black, would have uttered such a sentence with "Africans" or "Asians" in place of Australians. Phillips responds to his critics with the kind of sang-froid London surely wants in a mayor: "Australian visitors are part of what makes London what it is, and we love them for their robustness and their sense of humour," he told Pandora. "But we seem to have uncovered a few who have had an irony bypass."



Banish these publishing ghettos



BIDISHA

Women writers are squeezed into narrow roles by the literary cult of the heroic male

LOOKING FOR Superman? He may be lurking in your local bookshop. Sebastian Junger's *The Perfect Storm* has been published in the UK in a blaze of publicity penned by journo desperates to pick up tips on how to stare manfully into a camera lens, discuss tree surgery alongside hard news items and run a four-minute mile, for it seems that the bionic Mr Junger is capable of all these things and more.

His book – the story of a storm that killed six men – is being touted as a perfect nugget of "humane" reportage. He is the perfect alpha male: a jock in the woodland, an intellectual in his study and a performance-level athlete on the track. He writes about how tough it is to be a man. What a guy!

The literary world loves to create heroes. All those gents trying to write the Great American Novel. All those dudes out on the front line. All those put-upon English men like Nick Hornby, writing in their shifts, snivelling away about the pressures of modern life. The old Britpack of Julian Barnes, Martin Amis and Ian McEwan – everyone loves a lad with a fresh store of youthful anger and

an ever-ready ballpoint pen. In print culture (as in every other field), males assemble for themselves a range of heroic men clearly differentiated from one another: Will Self, snarling prose stylist with an ear for alliteration and a nose for narcotics; Alex Garland and his adventures in Thailand; Alan Warner, heir to Irvine Welsh's crown. They are like the knights of the Round Table, except that the table

is loaded with empty bottles, and situated inside the Groucho Club.

Women writers are so much more indistinct. The newest authors have no public profile, unlike their male contemporaries, and no clout within "social" media circles. There is no such thing as a "cult author" who is female. They are given less space on the page, almost no features coverage and little in the way of serious hype. They are not accepted into the literary scene unless they are tremendously beautiful, tremendously wise and matronly (all the better to serve critics' Oedipus complexes) – or shagging a journalist.

Evenings out with the guys from the publishing house are the sole preserve of up-for-it male writers keen to press the flesh and build up a young boys' network that may prove useful in years to come.

People don't quite know what to do with female writers, so they're given to lowly female critics to deal with. When my first novel came out it was reviewed under "women's fiction" or even worse, "black fiction". When women write, the world prefers the oldest values and gen-

der distinctions to remain intact in their texts. Women are given literary power only if their work conforms to standards (set by men and Caucasians) which maintain their inferiority in the long term.

The mega-hit Bridget Jones's *Diary*, for instance, is desperately conservative, despite its humorous presentation: it has a heroine without dignity or intelligence whose emotions are dictated by the actions of two men, both of whom are socially, physically, intellectually and professionally superior to her. The public like this book because it is deeply conformist (and therefore deeply sexist) in its politics.

If a writer is non-Caucasian then she has a double burden: she must also incorporate a whiff of racial antagonism, a soupçon of jungle lore. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a success in the West because it tells people precisely what they like to hear about India. Stories of deep caste differences, of squalid cities and lush, "tropical" vegetation, picturesque poverty and secret love forbidden by the constraints of a Draconian society all please a nation that believes the ex-

colonies simply fell apart when the Empire ceased to exist.

Of course, men automatically "gender" their work. It does not place them in a ghetto, as is the case for female writers; instead it places them in the arena of social significance precisely because the cult of masculinity is the rule, not the exception.

Maleness is the general, the universal, the standard. The story of man is the story of humankind. Hanif Kureishi's *Intimacy*, to pick the most recent example, is not the un-stylish bleat of a fat-faced scribbler who looks as if he'd try to fog you a fake Rolex. It is (we are asked to believe) the brave and confrontational cry of the masculine soul weighing its own "natural" desire for freedom against the claustrophobia of family life.

The only people who objected to this work were female critics. But, as most editors are men, as are most reviewers, and nearly all the hacks who interviewed Kureishi for all those prominent features, they seemed to get together, crank up the hype machine and propel the book into the best-seller lists.

Groping towards the right size of public sector



HAMISH MCRAE

Most people feel regret that the old virtues of public service have been swept aside

WE ARE in the middle of a public sector "can do" week – a string of announcements of how the Government intends to provide better public sector services, not just in its two priority areas of health and education, but in other areas too.

This approach has received a warm welcome for a number of reasons. For some it is a matter of ideology, but for most of us it is more than that. Everyone would like better public services. Most people feel a certain twinge of regret that the old virtues of public service seem to have been swept aside in the quest for market solutions and profit. And many people feel there must be some case for at least giving the public sector the opportunity to fight back.

The immediate question is whether this counter-attack will indeed move the frontiers between the state and the private sector not just here but, by example, elsewhere in the world. Britain's experience is important, for just as it led the rise of state provision of public services, so it has also led the retreat. Behind that question are even bigger ones. Is there a "right" size for the public sector in a developed country? Will there be a single global best practice in the provision of health care and education, as there is, say, in manufacturing cars, and if so, what will become the dominant model?

The frontier question is a fascinating one because we seem to be at a global turning point. If you take state involvement in industry as a measure, there is no question that the state has been routed. Nationalised industries, as a form of ownership of commercial activities, have been abandoned everywhere. The idea that to nationalise an industry was a good form of ownership proved to be a brief experiment which lasted less than half a century. Private-

isation, Britain's most significant intellectual export for a generation, has swept the world.

If however you take general government spending as a proportion of GDP as the measure of the size of the state, the argument that the state is being pushed back is much less clear-cut. The peak in the UK was right back in 1976, at close to 48 per cent of GDP. Now, a generation later, we are back to 40 per cent. But the overall peak in the developed world was reached only in 1993 at 41 per cent, and that peak hides enormous variations. In the US, government spending is 32 per cent of GDP; in Sweden 60 per cent. The big picture is that the ratio of public spending to GDP in the developed world rose steadily until the early 1980s, then levelled off, and may since the early 1990s, be falling. But it is not yet clear that it is actually falling, and this big picture conceals the fact that countries with very similar standards of living chose to have public sectors of very different size.

Will our new burst of faith in the public sector here have resonance

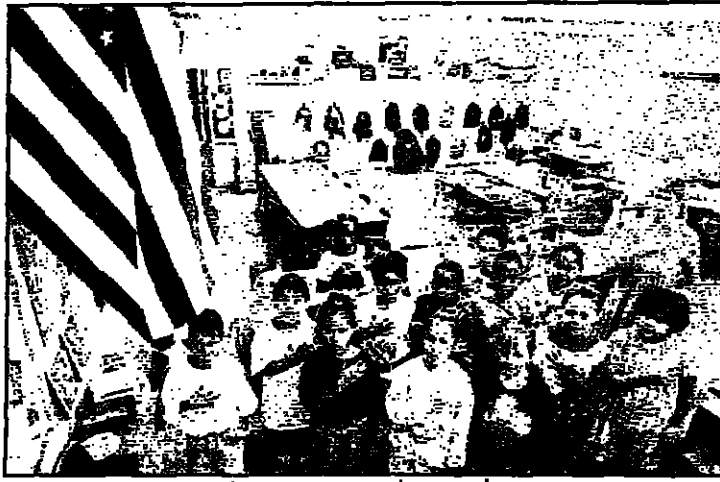
elsewhere? That depends on whether it works, whether we do indeed get better services or whether the money disappears into some black hole. But there is a structural issue which will restrict our influence.

Both our health and education systems are unusually centralised by world standards which means that it is possible for central government to influence the industries to a much greater extent than would be possible elsewhere. On the other hand, these are models we have failed to export. No other country has built anything as centralised as the NHS. Few other countries have as centralised management of schools or universities.

As a result, while the outcome of Labour's plans for both health and education will be scrutinised in ministries and think-tanks all around the world, it would be naive of us to think that the general policy of what we do here will be widely adopted elsewhere. We may be influential in detail: Gordon Brown's emphasis on linking funding to modernisation may well be imitated. But I do not see us exporting any big ideas about either the boundaries between state and private sector, or the management of a nation's health care. Our systems and those of other countries are simply too different.

Are there then any universal rules for running services well – or to put the point more worryingly, might our methods be well short of world best practice?

The trouble here is that there is no direct competition between countries in public services. If British universities were bad by world standards there would be no easy way the Japanese could come in and take them over. Short of going to America, there is no easy way we can buy US health services. There is a tiny trade at the top of the market



The American way of education

and, incidentally, some evidence that at that end of the scale we have very good health and education services: many foreigners come here for Harley Street and Oxbridge.

But mostly there are no such market signals of success or failure. We saw that our motor industry was badly-run by world standards because its market and its companies were taken over. There is no real parallel in health care or education, for these service industries still operate in national compartments, insulated from foreign competition.

If you cannot rely on market signals, you have to find some other method of measuring your performance. This is not going to be easy, but it can be done.

You start by comparing one bit under your control with another similar bit: the performance of one school against another; one hospital against another; one police force against another. You look at your schools against whatever seem to be the best in the world, the Swedish, the Swiss, the American or whatever. You do the same for hospitals, po-

lice and other services. Once you have identified the things that seem to work you apply them – just as lean manufacturing was applied through the motor industry. You get rid of the arrogance that "our" way of doing things is better than that of other countries. If it is, then great; if not, dump it.

I do not know whether there is a single best practice in running a hospital, a university, a police force or whatever: I suspect not; rather there are several different ways all of which can be made to work pretty well. But there are clearly some ways which are dreadful and we have our share here. It is intolerable that we should put up with worse service from the public sector than we do from the private.

So maybe this not just a "can do" week for the public sector but more importantly a "must do" week – the start of a long "must do" period when the big public sector industries will themselves determine, by their performance, whether they can turn the tide that has been running against them.

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Creating opportunities for the young

I HAVE this view which is very old hat, I think, which is that young people need four things: they need responsibility, permitting circumstances, respect, and recognition. So if I were in a Foyer, I would be asking myself whether young people have a sense of responsibility and whether they have opportunities for leadership because everybody likes responsibility – it's the work bit that gets you down but the leading is fun, and it's fun for everyone.

The second thing, it seems to me, and what people need at all ages, but particularly at the ages of transition, are "permitting circumstances", and that means being given the freedom and room to experiment. You need new experiences. Most people know that because new experiences broaden the mind, they excite the imagination. One of the things we've done in Birmingham is to try to transform the confidence of young people is to create guarantees at the primary and secondary school level which will guarantee the youngsters the opportunity to take part in

a week's residential experience. I don't think anybody ever comes back from a good residential experience at any age without every participant having opened up different possibilities for themselves as learners and as people, and the people involved, as you rightly said, come back seeing people in a different way, so it's a vivid, traumatic learning experience. And people need respect and recognition, and that's what many people are desperately searching for. When I said I wanted to call this talk "Mind the gap", I was conscious of the proportion of a youngster's waking life that is spent at school.

But how about the youngster who goes to a school that lays on lots of out of school opportunities? And how about the young person who lives in a secure home and gets the balance of giving people responsibility, permitting circumstances, respect and recognition? The likelihood is that this particular type of home is looking after, in one way or another, about 70 per cent of the time that the youngster has.

And that equals security



PODIUM

TIM BRIGHOUSE
From a speech by
Birmingham's Chief
Education Officer to
the Foyer Federation

and an odds-on chance of succeeding in life. How about young people, however, who are part of that 10 per cent at secondary level who seem persistently to be bunking off school?

How about those young people who live in circumstances, as in parts of Birmingham, that are severely overcrowded, who haven't got any opportunities to do homework, even if they're inclined to do it?

What of those who, per-

haps, are in homes that some of us have seen, but would not live in?

Now it's those young people that it seems to me we should be worried about. I think we should take some courage and energy from the fact that the number of youngsters in those circumstances are fewer, but the circumstances they are in seem worse, because more and more people are succeeding in the education system.

That was not the case when I was at school. The few succeeded, the many did not. So I think that the issue of minding this gap is a really big one. If you really wanted to transform life's chances, then personally, I feel, let's try to get organised with health visitors and with housing agencies around transforming the experiences of youngsters in their first three years of life.

Anybody who sees a youngster's development in that period would know that people from my neck of the woods who keep talking about nursery schools and classes, are patently missing the target by a long way.

Birth to three years of age

is the territory that we really should be working on. And moving on from childhood to adolescence must also be recognised as a danger as well.

Now some of us are engaged in trying to do something about that. Where I work, two things are worth mentioning – one is a birth to five service that does exactly what I've just described. We're into the business of screening youngsters, asking health visitors to see whether at 9, 10, 11, 12 months, youngsters are, or are not, developing their language receptively, expressively, or behaviourally.

We need to have some notion of whether a place like Birmingham, where more than twice the average number of pupils leave with no qualifications, has a generation at risk. We have about 10 per cent of children who aren't attending school regularly.

I think those are the most at risk: a generation of people in our cities and I would love to see more opportunity, not for remedial programmes, but opportunities for them to unlock their potential.

The truth about race and crime



STEPHEN POLLARD

Yes, there is a statistical link between crime and ethnic origin - black people are the victims

YOU ARE walking home late at night. The road is deserted. As you look ahead you notice two young men. You get a bit nearer and see that they are black. Be honest, does the adrenaline not pump that little bit quicker with fear?

What do you do - carry on, or cross the road? Better safe than sorry. No, you are not racist. Some of your best friends are black. You just have to be careful. It is the evidence, isn't it? Everyone knows that the figures show that young black men are so much more likely to mug than anyone else. You are just being rational. Until you know them and can be sure that you are safe, they are best avoided. Just cross the road.

Every day brings more stories of apparently random acts of violence, from street muggings and rapes to murders. And more often than not when the face of the suspect is drawn, he is black. With headlines such as "Black crime - the alarming figures" and "Black crime shock" (from the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sun*), it is little wonder that many of us live in fear of the black criminal.

The headlines are true, in a sense. There is a black crime shock. According to the police's own figures, for every attack on a white person, there are 36 on Afro-Caribbeans and 50 on Asians. Those are the "alarming figures" of black crime. Indeed, blacks are more likely to be victims of both household and personal crimes - 13 per cent of blacks have been burgled, twice the figure for whites.

This week the Stephen Lawrence inquiry draws to a close. Some of the evidence from the police's own lips has been astonishing. As we still don't know for certain what happened, only one thing is sure: Stephen was one of many black victims of violence.

The case is not, of course, typical. Part of the fascination is that the five thugs who helped the inquiry with its enquiries appear literally to have got away with murder. But more than that, the story of Stephen Lawrence's last night out in Eltham draws together some of the threads that we would rather were left undone. We refuse to believe that the police could be so callous as to treat



Doreen Lawrence lays a wreath on a memorial to her son Stephen, one of many black victims of racial violence

Grieve

a black victim of violence any worse than a white victim. We certainly deny the idea that they might not even care about black victims.

We like to believe that we are all equal before the law. And we don't like to think about white-on-black violence. Because mainstream politics is more or less free of race and institutionalised racism is rare, we think of Britain as a relatively tranquil society.

For most of us it is. But the Stephen Lawrence case is just a more extreme example of the real face of Britain that many blacks have to confront.

Sure enough, a Home Office report published in April which examined for the first time how blacks and Asians feel about crime shows that many are "imprisoned" by a fear of violence.

The response to these findings has been surprise, since most of us still tend to believe the myth of the black criminal rather than the reality of the black victim.

Some so-called experts and rabble rousing politicians have dismissed the report. But its findings are pretty unsurprising given the crime statistics.

White fear of a black crime threat is based on apprehension of

what might be. For blacks, the crime figures show that fear is based on what is.

It should come as no surprise, then, that according to the Home Office - hardly the voice of extremist black politics - almost 30 per cent of blacks, 27 per cent of Indians and 22 per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis avoid taking part in many traditional British activities, such as going to football matches, spending an evening in the pub or dancing in nightclubs.

As the report puts it: "They perceive themselves to be at greater risk of crime than whites, worry more about falling victim to a crime and feel less safe on the streets or within their own homes at night."

"To a large extent this is a reflection of their higher risk of victimisation and harassment."

The statistics show that if any group has reason to be afraid of crime it is not whites but blacks. The crime figures if anything understate the situation, since many blacks have little confidence in the police and so fail to report some crimes which they suffer.

After the revelations at the Stephen Lawrence inquiry of what one might charitably describe as police indifference, it is easy to see

why. According to the official figures there are 130,000 incidents of racial harassment or abuse every year - one every four minutes.

That is bad enough. But the number that are not reported can only be guessed at. So much for a tranquil society.

This whole area has an Alice in Wonderland feel to it. The sobering effect of reality has yet to hit even some of those who deal every day in the real world, such as the police themselves.

None of this means, of course, that blacks are less likely to be criminals, just that they are more likely to be victims. In fact their violent crime rate is roughly the same as that of whites. Among those blacks who are criminals, property offences are the most common, with 40 per cent of young male blacks having offended - the same statistic as for young whites (although the figure is only 12 per cent for Bangladeshis). Twenty five per cent have committed a violent crime, compared with 20 per cent of Pakistanis and whites (and 10 per cent of Bangladeshis).

In the Seventies and Eighties, the so-called "sus" laws were particularly unpopular among the black community. The police were effec-

tively given carte blanche to stop anyone they chose, and more often than not they chose to stop young black men. When the sus laws were abolished there was a widespread feeling that relations with the police would improve. Some chance.

Despite the police's own figures and the less alarming - although still unpleasant - truth they reveal about black criminals, the ethnic minorities are still five times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than whites: more than a quarter of all those stopped in the last year for which we have figures were from the ethnic minorities, who comprise only six per cent of the population.

Much of this is because the police have so few non-white officers. For all that they claim to have made strenuous efforts to improve the proportion of black officers, they still number no more than 3 per cent of the Metropolitan Police. Of this tiny number, 91 per cent are constables - the lowest rank. This compares with the 76 per cent of white officers who are stuck at constable level. Not one of the Met's 180 superintendents - the rank in charge of police stations - is non-white. This is usually defended by the argument that the po-

lice force is, and should be, racially blind. It certainly should be. The evidence, however, suggests that it just as certainly isn't.

Law and order is an area bedevilled in equal parts by myth and supposition. Easy generalisations, sloppy thinking and inadequate analysis typify most reports. The image of the little old lady, imprisoned in her high-rise council flat by marauding black druggies is, of course, sometimes true. But it is overstated because it is a lot easier to trot out than the more complicated and more likely picture of a black family afraid to go out because of young white and black hoodlums.

No victim of crime, whether black or white, can be blamed for extrapolating a more general lesson from their own experience, and when we read of other people's horror stories it is easy to do the same. We have certainly become a more violent society. And the crime rate among the black community is disgracefully high.

But then so it is among the white population. If tough on crime is ever to be more than a very catchy slogan, we need as a first step to start recognising who are the real victims.

RIGHT OF REPLY

ADAM SEARLE

A consultant plastic surgeon defends the use of silicone-gel breast implants

MOST PATIENTS who go to consultant plastic surgeons in this country are normal people with a perceived or a real abnormality. They may require treatment because of cancer or an inherited deformity. Plastic surgeons do not sell implants. Implants, such as the scalpel or suture, are tools which are used surgically to modify form or shape.

Around a third of patients who have implantations of silicone are undergoing reconstruction in situations of gross asymmetry with failure of one breast to develop, or loss of breast tissue at the time of cancer treatment. And patients who request augmentation rarely ask for "large breastedness". Most augmentation is a means of addressing the psychological wounds which empty or sagging breasts inflict on women's self-esteem. They do not seek the ridiculous; they just want to be proportional and to feel normal. They want to forget about their breasts.

So what is the answer? At presentation, I look my patients in the eye and say, "you realise my job is to put you off". I do not think that the implants are dangerous, but I have to test the depth of need for cosmetic adjustment. It is not like getting your hair done. It requires a general anaesthetic. Patients are told at first presentation that much talking needs to be done before progressing to an operating room. I never allow patients to make decisions about their surgery on our first encounter, but they are sent away with information to think over in their own mind, and to talk to friends and relatives about. Patients should not be tempted by quick fixes. Care must be taken with techniques, and post-operative care must continue for many months.

There is a shortage of good quality scientific data about breast implantation. Biomaterials have moved a long way since the Sixties. The silicone debate is hampered by its history. The future must lie in proper standards of care with analysis of the evidence and outcomes. To sink the silicone debate in a moratorium, sensationalism or the law courts will only bury the truth for ever.

What happened to Adolf?

WE SEE Hitler through a glass, darkly. If his political career sets up a latter-day mirror for princes, its reflections are multiply puzzling. At one point in his sometimes engrossing book, Ron Rosenbaum describes the Ashmolean Museum's facade as "soot-begrimed" and "gargoyle-encrusted". The adjectives might also apply to his subject. Even Hitler's reception is prone to local variation. Men get named "Hitler" in Nepal, where the great dictator is celebrated much as Victorian liberals feted Garibaldi.

Rosenbaum's subtitle is "the search for the origins of Hitler's evil". It's far from obvious, though, what this search could be. In the *Protagoras*, Plato argues that nobody knowingly chooses the bad, but mistakes it for the good. Hitler's "evil" presumably signifies his responsibility for the human cost of his years in power. But to describe him as responsible is already to say that he originated those bad effects. If something else originated them (the Versailles Treaty, German anti-semitism, or Adolf's childhood traumas), then it's no longer Hitler's evil that we're talking about. The question disappears, or answers itself.

Still, many find the question too nagging to ignore. As Nietzsche said, if we know the why of life, we can put up with almost any how. Rosenbaum is also prey to this pang.

Often, in Hitler biographies, the evidential trail gives out: for example, with the murky death of his half-niece Geli Raubal. One rumour claims that Hitler had made incriminating pornographic drawings of Geli, consigned to a lost safe-deposit box. Rosenbaum notes the trope of the "lost box" in Hitler stories - the reliquary, but also repository of our faith that enigmas are soluble. This gave poor old Lord Dacre the rumour over the Hitler "Diaries". If we can't explain Hitler, at least we might explain why we need to try.

The need to explain is also prompt-



THURSDAY BOOK

EXPLAINING HITLER: THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF HIS EVIL
BY RON ROSENBAUM, MACMILLAN, £25

ed by fear that the trail may end where it began: disturbingly close to home. There's the English branch of clan Schicklgruber. William and Bridget Hitler, burghers of Liverpool, son and wife of Adolf's bigamous half-brother Alois. Then there's Hitler's softer side - meat-dodging, green, kind to dogs and children. The jacket photos play up the Mr Nasty/Mr Nice duality, with the adult Adolf in Nuremberg-rant mode next to a cuddly infant Führer in romper suit and booties.

In sifting these apparitions, we're caught between Macbeth's "there's no art to find the mind's construction in the face" and Wittgenstein's view that the best picture of the human soul is the human face. One-shot explanations flirt with absurdity. A prime instance is Kimberley Cornish's recent wacko book

The Jew of Linz, which argues that the "source" of Hitler's anti-semitism was playful rivalry with his classmate - the same Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Rumours also persist that, in the tackle department, Hitler returned less than a hundred annas to the rupee. These include his reputedly sub-zero sperm-count, and what his early biographer Alan Bullock calls the "one-ball business" - not to mention the fabled truncation of young Adolf's manhood by an incensed billy-goat.

Rosenbaum gives this cornucopia of Hitleriana a wry berth. He parades Bullock, Dacre, Claude Lanzmann, George Steiner, Lucy Dawidowicz, Daniel Goldhagen and others, purveying Hitler as mountebank, genocidal maniac or Bismarckian power-broker. It's tempting to see the man - and indeed Nazi ideolo-

gy - as the product of negative projection. As the joke went, the ideal Nazi had to be slim like Goering, able-bodied like Goebbels, blond like Hitler, and with a name like Rosenberg's. Indeed, the chief suspect for Hitler's demon is "the Jew within": the idea that his paternal grandfather was no cold-blooded Aryan, but a bourgeois Hebrew.

Oddly enough, given the book's aims, Rosenbaum disclaims any interest in psychology. Despite obsessive scrutiny of his interviewees' motives, he spares himself similar analysis. He confesses to knowing no German or French, and virtually ignores criticisms of "intentionalist" explanations of the Holocaust - unsurprisingly, since if those criticisms succeed, his book loses its point.

At times he dallies with daftness. A case in point is his "esoteric" reading of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forgery designed to blacken world Jewry, based on an 1860s satire of Napoleon III. Rosenbaum thinks this Machiavellian spoof may have suggested to Hitler his own political *modus operandi*. He is drawn by similar patterns of "explanation" elsewhere, where rumour and reality swap places. Gossip about Reinhard Heydrich's Jewishness is traced not to the fact that Heydrich's step-grandfather was named Suss, but that Reinhard's father Bruno was given to doing cod-yiddisher turns at parties.

Finally, the book meets evil with banality. Hitler hasn't been explained, Rosenbaum says, but that doesn't make him inexplicable. His faith may be misplaced.

A prominent school of social explanation relies on the self-understanding of human actors: but this trail runs cold if the actors themselves aim to act pointlessly. Primo Levi recalled that an SS guard at Auschwitz, asked to explain a petty act of brutality, replied: "Here there's no why."

GLEN NEWBY

THURSDAY POEM

DARK MOON
BY SARAH CORBETT

This is the dark me -
twisted body of Hawthorn,
the latent witching of that tree,
its black muscle harming itself
but growing old, and ugly face
proud to be ugly,
a sneer at beautiful things.

Prepare yourself,
I may bud and burst -
a veiled hag, a trick of spring
that watches inwards, turns
and turns a hallowed magic
from my harsh skin,
my spiked and flowering hands.

This poem comes from Sarah Corbett's first collection, *The Red Wardrobe*, just published at £6.95 by Seren Books, 2 Wyndham Street, Bridgend CF31 1EF

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Miroslav Holub

A POET should be all things to all men. One of those who lived up to that difficult standard was Miroslav Holub.

His frank, open-hearted, witty poems were enjoyed by all kinds of people, but by Eastern Europeans in particular. They have that primitive, peasant touch of earthy humour and wisdom that is all too lacking in our British poetic tradition, and a range of subjects and moods that display a tremendous versatility of thought and language – a breadth of poetic experience and expertise that is considered frivolous in our contemporary academic poetic circles.

But then, Holub was brought up in the European tradition, with German as a second language, like Franz Kafka. The first poets he read at school were the Latins and the Greeks, then the Germans and the French, and later on the Poles. Among the French were all the surrealists and the playful inventions of Jacques Prévert and Raymond Queneau – a whole world of fantastic thinking that in Britain went out of fashion with *Alice in Wonderland*. But he also admired more serious writers, like the pacifist Romain Rolland: if Holub had any kind of political stance, it was an anarchic pacifism. His view of life was universal, with a positive relish for the absurd in our daily lives.

He graduated from high school in the sombre year of 1942, and at once was conscripted to work as a labourer at Pilsen railway station. (His father worked for the Czech railways as a lawyer; his mother was a teacher of French and German.) It was not until the war was over that he was allowed to continue with his studies at the Charles University in Prague, where he made a special study of immunology at the Microbiological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He earned his MD in 1953.

He began contacts with the world outside his homeland as a researcher at the Public Health Research Institute in New York (1955-57) and at the Max Planck Institute of Immunology in Freiburg (1958-59).

He then held important posts at the Central Committee of Czech Scientific Workers (1959-71) and at the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine from 1972, where he was to become the Head of the Department of Immunology in 1990. These posts led to the writing of scientific papers and eventually to several serious studies with titles like *Experimental Morphology of Antibody Formation* (1958), *The Lymphocyte and the Immune Response* (1967) and *The Immunology of Nude Mice* (1969) – titles that possess a certain personal comic undertone.

Holub had earned his PhD in 1958, the year in which he produced his first volume of poetry, *Day Duty*. He did much to popularise science when he became editor of the scientific magazine *Vesmír* in the early Fifties.

Like his countryman Bohumil Hrabal, another capricious and idiosyncratic satirist, he remained detached from politics after the



Holub's plain universality of poetic vision derives from a scientist's microscopic perception of things

Maira Conway

Communist take-over in 1948, but became a member of the subtle disruptive literary group "Poetry of Everyday" which brought him in touch with a wide range of Czech intellectuals. From 1970 to 1980 the Czech government under Gustav Husák treated Holub as a "non-person" for signing a street petition, and his books could only be found in foreign translations, the excuse being that there was a paper shortage.

In Daniel Weissbort's *The Poetry of Survival: post-war poets of Central and Eastern Europe* (1991), definitely the best introduction in English to this complicated subject, the editor quotes from a long letter by Holub in which the poet-scientist describes how he became a poet. He tells us he had "an almost religious admiration for the French Surrealists", but at first believed poetry was something too transcendental for him to achieve. He accepted that he could only be an imitator of poets like Jaroslav Seifert (who translated Apollinaire into Czech) and the Polish poet and essayist Zbigniew Herbert, his close contemporary. (He learned Polish in order to be able to read him in the original, and to collaborate on the first edition of the poet's works in Czech translation).

Other prominent influences were near-contemporary German poets like Günter Kunert and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and the great Yugoslav Vasko Popa. He also liked the San Francisco poets of the Beat Generation, and the free-wheeling poetry of Frank O'Hara, whose work is the closest I can imagine in English to Holub's later style.

Another well-known American poet he discovered was also a doctor, William Carlos Williams, whose sprightly imagist verses were as free and clear as his own. Holub begins one of his poems, "Wings", with a quote from Williams:

There is
the microscopic
anatomy
of the whale
this is
reassuring...

Holub plays around with this quotation in a string of delightful variations, one of which runs:

But above all
we have
the ability
to sort peas,
to cup water in our hands,
to seek
the right screw
under the sofa
for hours
This
gives us
wings.

Seeking the right screw for the right linguistic nut might be said to be the basic mechanics of Miroslav Holub's art.

Holub goes on in the interview with Weissbort: "My coming into poetry was to find out if it was poetry, if what I was doing was poetry at all. I didn't find any correspondences. I just discovered that I might be another kind." Such was the modesty of a fine poet in the making. The American influence was ever stronger, while the British seemed to him too insular, too domesticated: The more I learn about American poetry, which I have always admired

because of its consistency and scholarly evolution, the more I feel, my God, they are so good and yet they are missing something, something from my household, something more concrete, beyond the personal. We felt (our poetry) to be a counter-cultural movement, as a protest against the generalising, solemn, official poetry. But in more general terms there was a feeling that whatever you are doing represents the feeling of the guys in the street. All of them.

Hence the plain universality of Miroslav Holub's poetic vision: a scientist's microscopic perception of things at street level is raised to unexpected heights of revelation.

It was not poetry in the traditional Czech sense at all, and this was what gives it such a special attraction. The emotion was only suggested, however powerful it might be, and ideals were translated into symbols and images of great originality and force in poems like "Brief Thoughts on Cats Growing in Trees" and "Brief Thoughts on Cracks". But he was able to utter profoundly lonely cries, muted and disturbingly offhand, like the poem about Kafka's grave in the Jewish cemetery of Prague-Straschnitz:

Lurking under the maple trees
a few forlorn stones
like scattered words.
Loneliness so close
it has to be made of stone...

Then the sombre, reflective note turns into grim humour when the guardian of the graves answers questions (presumably about the location of Kafka's memorial stone, on which he is referred to as "Dr Franz Kafka") with: "Sorry, I don't know. / I'm not from Prague." This

throwaway tone has a typically surreal sound, something like the Prévert poems and lyrics he so much admired in his youth.

It was not until 1982 that Holub was again allowed to publish his work in Czech. He was a very prolific author, and produced a book of poetry about once a year, along with translations and newspaper essays and scientific papers. It might be expected that he would strive to keep these different literary voices separate. He says:

Because my vocabulary is weighted with scientific terms I could easily introduce all kinds of esoteric variations. But I always go for something middling, which can be understood in the context, doesn't have to be looked up in the dictionary. But I also feel, why should we understand every single word? What I basically like is novelty, knowing by experiment, trial and error: maybe. A more concrete or realistic definition would be: I just write as a game. Yes! It's a game in the laboratory, with certain rules, and it is another game in a book, with other rules, and I just don't like to repeat any one game too many times.

And this master of all kinds of games ends with:

One of my peculiarities is that I am not too serious about anything, and not even about personal language, which makes me sort of free. I play lots of games in my prose, which is quite provocative to some people, but makes my style in Czech very distinctive.

James Kirkup

Miroslav Holub, poet, immunologist and writer: born Pilsen, Czechoslovakia 23 September 1923; three times married (two sons, one daughter); died 14 July 1998.

The Rampage

The last time
there was a genuine rampage,
herds stampeding
with the zest of hurricanes,
with the pulsations of a storm,
and the force of destiny,

when the roar went up
against the villous ceiling,
when the stronger ones
pushed forward to the cruel
thunder of whips while the zombies
fell back into permanent darkness,

the last time
the cavalry charged
across the whole width of the enemy
line
into the gap between life and death,
and not even one single droplet of
misery
dripped,

the last time
something really won
and the rest turned into compost

that was when the sperm
made the journey
up the oviduct.

This was 'to be or not to be'.

Since that time we've been tottering
round
with the embarrassment of softening
skeletons,
with the wistful caution
of mountain gorillas in the rain;
we keep hoping for the time-lapse soul,
secreting
marital problems and
a stationary home metaphysics

against which
the adenosine triphosphate of every
fucked-up cell
is like the explosion of a star
in a chicken coop.

Title poem from *The Rampage* (Faber and Faber, 1997)

Dick McDonald

DICK McDONALD has gone to his grave with one extraordinary distinction. In all probability, he is owner of the most famous name on earth, recognised by more of this planet's inhabitants than Bill Clinton, Michael Jordan or Ronaldo. That eminence is due not to political office or sporting brilliance, but to the humble hamburger.

Dick McDonald and his elder brother Mac (Maurice) never actually ran, nor even directly invented the fast-food chain that today has 23,000 outlets in 111 countries. But their eminence is due not to political office or sporting brilliance, but to the humble hamburger.

The first McDonald's saw the light of day in 1948 in San Bernardino, in those days a dusty little town 60 miles east of Los Angeles. No trace remains today of the original establishment on the corner of 14th and E Streets, which is now an empty lot. But in those post-war years when new highways and multi-car families were transforming the habits of young Americans, the Speedee Service System pioneered by the brothers was a revolution whose time had come. The drive-by restaurant was born.

Cars and people queued around the block for the 15-cent hamburgers, 19-cent cheeseburgers, 10-cent french fries and milkshakes at 20



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cents a time. Within a few years seven other franchises followed in southern California. The formula was everywhere the same: a fixed menu of the same proven items, served straight away. And then, in 1954, came the encounter which would turn McDonald's into a national, and then an international institution.

That year a one-time piano player, property hustler and travelling salesman called Ray Kroc noticed something strange. Kroc had the exclusive distribution rights for the "multi-mixer", a new invention that could mix five milkshakes simultaneously. To his astonishment, he noticed that no less than eight of the multi-mixers were in service at a small restaurant in San Bernardino, and decided to pay a visit. When he did, Kroc saw that milkshakes were only a small part of the story. Mac and Dick McDonald's idea, he realised, was a potential goldmine.

As a first move, to raise sales of the multi-mixer, Kroc struck a royalty deal with the brothers. He

would open up a chain of hamburger restaurants on the McDonalds' formula, in return for which they would receive 0.5 per cent of gross takings. The first of them was on Lee Street, Des Plaines, a suburb of Chicago. This McDonald's does still exist, albeit as a museum, its golden arch and red and white tiles as immaculate as they were on opening day on 15 April 1955 (total take, according to the original ledger on display, \$366.12).

Within five years, 228 McDonald's were operating across the US, generating sales of over \$37m. Kroc had long since sold off the multi-mixer rights, to raise capital to expand his venture. In 1961 he bought out the rights of the brothers entirely, for \$2.7m – a huge sum in those days. But, measured against what McDonald's has since become, one of the steals of the century.

At that point Dick McDonald's financial links with the business ended. But, as with Sir Christopher Wren, if you seek his legacy look around. For St Paul's Cathedral read



The first McDonald's opened in 1948 in San Bernardino, 60 miles east of Los Angeles

the world. McDonald's restaurants are to be found in every continent, and the Golden Arches that adorn every one of them were dreamed up by Dick. If Mac McDonald (who died in 1971) was the administrator, Dick was the marketing man. He devised the original red-and-white-tile decor, and the trademark "Millions (now of course "Billions")

Served" signs. The million people the company directly and indirectly employs, the franchisees and suppliers who depend on the brand, all owe Dick McDonald a colossal debt.

But, back in 1948 in San Bernardino, he could not have imagined what would follow: a company with annual sales of \$33bn (£20bn), that

may well be the world's largest single supplier of food. In Britain alone it serves 500 million meals a year at 870 restaurants. In the US, 96 per cent of the population uses a McDonald's at least once a year (and President Clinton, famously, a good deal more often than that), and the first job of one in seven Americans was at McDonald's. Presidents and

sports stars may come and go. The venture to which Dick McDonald gave his name will last for ever.

Rupert Cornwell

Richard McDonald, restaurateur: born Manchester, New Hampshire 1909; married (one stepson); died Manchester, New Hampshire 14 July 1998.

Beryl Bryden

BERYL BRYDEN was a movable jam session (well, almost, for she was a large lady). She was an inveterate sinner-in and brought a party atmosphere with her wherever she went.

"Wherever you were playing in the world," said Humphrey Lyttelton, "even if it was a one-nighter at an oasis in the Sahara, sooner or later, a little dot would appear on the horizon and it would turn out to be Beryl Bryden. She had a terrific flair for finding out where the action was."

"I met Beryl before I ever had a band when I was gigging around London in 1946. She was a trouper in the best sense of the word who never veered from the old blues choruses and vaudeville standards."

Bryden was loved by audiences all over the world and overwhelmed them with the power of her singing. If not with its musical accuracy or finesse. She began to make a name for herself abroad after she sang at the legendary Club du Vieux Colombier in Paris in 1953 and toured the world until her death.

Bryden lived for jazz and loved everything about it. Although her singing style was basically inflexible and unflinching, she idolised sophisticated performers and her claims to the friendship of the demigods of jazz like Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday, although on the face of it unlikely, were true. On that first trip to Paris she was befriended by the bandleader Maxm Saury and sang with his band. While there she met Armstrong's first wife, Lil, a jazz pianist in her own right. "She was originally a tailoress and she used to make Louis Armstrong's suits during the time she was married to him," said Bryden. "We had a great time going around together buying material which we would make up on her sewing machine. Afterwards she used to cook us pork chops and rice in the hotel room."

"The Paris job was my first professional one. One night Lionel Hampton came into the club and sat in on drums and piano. I couldn't believe it. My first pro residency and I was on the same stage as Lionel Hampton."

Always a fan, Bryden helped to found the first jazz club in her home town of Norwich in 1939. At this time she was also a founder member of the Nat Gonella fan club (her last recording was with Gonella, in March 1997). She had begun to sing as an amateur at the Cambridge Jazz Club in 1942. She moved to London in 1945 and worked as a secretary for two small independent jazz record labels, Esquire and Melodisc.

She made guest appearances with most of the traditional bands of the late Forties, including George Webb's Dixie-

landers, John Haim's Jelly Roll Kings and Freddy Randall, with whom she made her first recording in 1946. Bryden took up playing the washboard as a rhythm instrument and it became her trademark for the rest of her life. But her sense of rhythm was not as good as she thought it was. Sitting next to her myself at a concert by Count Basie's orchestra at the Kilburn State during the Fifties, I lost the subtleties of Basie's rhythm work as Bryden tried to clap her hands in time with the band throughout the entire concert.

In July 1954 at the beginning of the Skiffle boom Bryden was booked to record on washboard with the banjo player Lonnie Donegan and his bandleader Chris Barber, who was to play bass. The musicians were paid £2 10s each for the session. Two titles from it, "The Rock Island Line" and "John

'Wherever you were playing in the world, even if it was a one-nighter at an oasis in the Sahara, sooner or later, a dot would appear on the horizon and it would be Beryl Bryden'

Henry", were issued first as part as an album that sold 10,000 copies and later as a 78 record that pushed into the hit parade on both sides of the Atlantic and sold more than two million copies.

Soon afterwards Bryden travelled Europe in earnest, working in 1954 for the first time with the Dutch Swing College Band, the beginning of an association that was to last for many years. She recorded in many cities including in Vienna, a session with Lionel Hampton and Fatty George and his band. In 1962 she gained second place in the jazz singer category of the *Melody Maker's* annual poll, and in subsequent years worked across the Far East and Africa.

In 1968 there was a crisis in the Cold War and Russian tanks bowled threateningly about the satellite countries, including Poland. The US State De-



'Britain's Queen of the Blues'

Redferns

partment forbade American musicians from travelling behind the Iron Curtain. Beryl Bryden was impervious to tanks and decided to short-circuit the ludicrous situation. Along with Sandy Brown and the American jazz musicians Memphis Slim and Cecil Taylor she risked her liberty by travelling to and working at the Warsaw jazz festival. As a result she was very big, in all senses of the word, in the Communist countries.

Bryden was generally billed as "Britain's Queen of the Blues", and was crowned "Queen of Jazz" in Holland in 1978. She continued to make guest appearances and in recent years toured with theatre productions like *Jazzin' Around* (with Allen) and *I've Got What It Takes* (1994), her tribute to the centenary of Bessie Smith. During 1995 she toured with the cornetist Digby Fair-

weather's *Salute to Satchmo*. She returned to Australia to sing at the 1995 Jazz Convention and fulfilled her last booking at a jazz club in Eindhoven, Holland, on 6 June.

Bryden was able to ignore any of the major developments that occurred in jazz and her music stayed the same throughout her career. It didn't need to change because that was the way her audiences wanted it. She had a separate minor career as a jazz photographer, where she showed a good grasp of form and technique and had many of her photographs published.

Steve Voce

Beryl Audrey Bryden, jazz singer, washboard player and photographer; born Norwich 11 May 1920; died London 14 July 1998.

HISTORICAL NOTES

ANDREW SINCLAIR

The assassination of Elisabeth of Austria

FAME IS not only a spur, but a fear. Those who court it come to dread its power and may try to flee. Yet in the end, as Elisabeth the Empress of Austria discovered, celebrity cannot be avoided. For that is the smile with the knife.

The Empress died a hundred years ago on a pier by Lake Geneva. She had shunned a police escort. With her walked only one countess in black. The anarchist and stalker, who stabbed her to the heart, said simply: "I wanted to kill a royalty. It did not matter which one."

He had killed the most alluring figure of the Victorian age. And her fame was her executioner. She came from the Bavarian Wittelsbach family with its streak of extravagant madness. She was married too young to the Emperor of Austria. She was sold on the market, she later said, before she knew better.

After giving the imperial crown three children, including a son who would later commit suicide at Mayerling, she decided she could no longer stand the life at court. Increasingly erratic, she travelled incessantly, driven all across Europe and the Near East. The more she ran away, the more famous she became. Always hiding behind a veil or a fan or a parasol, she shunned the earliest photographers and cameramen. And yet pictures and photographs of her appeared in tens of thousands of magazines and newspapers and homes.

For she was obsessed by the care of her own beauty, even if she appeared not to want to show it off. Her travelling and her daily work-out in a travelling gym were a premature example to her sex. In a period where princesses were the film and pop stars of the time, she was the icon of her age. She was tall and slender with coiled hair that could fall down to her knees. The finest horsewoman in Europe, she was an inspiration to the independence movements in Hungary and Ireland as well as to those early feminists who saw her flight from Vienna as an opposition to male domination.

Mark Twain and Rebecca West mourned her murder. Her killing made Twain write that he was part of world history again.

The assassination would be described and painted a thousand years from now. For Rebecca West, Elisabeth had given proof of



Elisabeth: fame was her executioner

greatness, although she was said to be a little mad.

In spite of her flight for 30 years, Elisabeth was too well known not to be recognised. She had chosen to turn herself into a fashion plate for other women, who were also trying to escape stifling conventions. Yet this banner of design was her fate. She attracted danger. Elisabeth did not deserve her death, which could be said to be the result of her celebrity. Yet this most dramatic of many imperial tragedies proved to be the prelude to the collapse of the three great dynasties of Europe, the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs, at the end of the First World War. Her single sad end was their forecast of immolation.

To seek fame is to choose its verdict. A double-edged sword, its sharp cut is a final severance. As Lord Byron wrote of the notorious in Childe Harold: "Mortals who sought and found, by dangerous road, / A path to perpetuity of fame."

Andrew Sinclair is the author of *Death by Fame: a life of Elisabeth, Empress of Austria* (Constable, £16.99).

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

CELLAN-JONES: On 11 July 1998, a son, Rufus Gareth, a brother for Adam, to Diane Coyle and Rory Cellan-Jones.

DEATHS

SPENCER: John, passed away peacefully at home, on 13 July, aged 73 years. Funeral service to be held on Friday 17 July at 2pm at St John the Baptist Church, Pewsey, Wilt. All friends are welcome. No flowers by request. Donations may be made to Prospect Hospice, c/o F. Dewey, 26 River St, Pewsey, SN9 5DL.

WHEATLEY: Doris, formerly of Gorton College and Cambridge Communication, died peacefully at home on 14 July. Friend for 60 years of Kay; loving mother of Joanna and Jacques; grand-mother of Sarah, Victoria, Mark and Rachel; great-grandmother of Christopher, Jennifer and Rebecca. Cremation at Cambridge City Crematorium West Chapel on Monday 20 July at 11.15am. Family flowers only please, but donations may be sent to Amnesty International, c/o E.W. Cook Funeral Service, 49 Church Street, Wingham, Cambridge CB4 5PS.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, in memoriam) are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, marriages), which must be submitted in writing, are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). Always include a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of Edinburgh, Colonel-in-Chief, attends the 43rd Annual Intelligence Corps Officers' Dinner at the

BIRTHDAYS

Professor Anita Brookner, art historian and novelist, 60; Mr Phillip Carrick, cricketer, 46; Mrs Margaret Court, tennis player, 56; Mr Alan Donnelly, MEP, 41; Mr Frank Field MP, Minister for Social Security and Welfare Reform, 56; Professor Sir Hugh Ford, mechanical engineer, 85; Sir John Freeland, QC, former legal adviser, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 71; Mr Brian Howard, former deputy chairman, Marks & Spencer, 72; Miss Shirley Hughes, writer and illustrator, 71; The Ven Dr Harold Lockley, former Archdeacon of Loughborough, 82; Mr Thomas Megahy, MEP, 69; Mr Edward Miller, former Master of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, 83; The Right Rev John Nicholls, Bishop of Sheffield, 55; Sir Michael Morland, High Court judge, 69; Lord Prence, former government minister, 78; Professor Sir Philip Randle, biochemist, 72; General Bernard Rogers, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, 77; Mr Tom Rosenthal, publisher, 63; Mr John Warr, former President, MCC, 71; Miss Diana Warwick, trade union leader, 53; Sir George Young MP, former Transport Secretary, 57; Mr Pinchas Zukerman, violinist, 50.

ANNIVERSARIES

Births: Andrea del Sarto (Andrea Domenico d'Agnolo di Francesco), painter, 1486; Joseph Wilton, sculptor, 1722; Sir Joshua Reynolds, painter,

1723; Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, painter, 1796; Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist, 1821; Luigi Arditi, violinist and composer, 1822; Henri Viotta, conductor and composer, 1848; Eugene Auguste Ysaie, composer and violinist, 1858; Jens Otto Harry Jerspersen, linguist and philologist, 1860; George A. Birmingham (The Rev James Owen Hannay), novelist, 1865; Roald Amundsen, Polar explorer, 1872; Trygve Halvdan Lie, statesman, 1869; Ginger Rogers (Virginia Katherine McMath), actress and dancer, 1911. Deaths: Pope Innocent III, 1216; Anne of Cleves, fourth wife of Henry VIII, 1557; François-Michel Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois, statesman, 1691; Thomas Yalden, poet and writer of fables, 1736; Giuseppe Maria Crespi, painter and etcher, 1747; Josiah Spode, potter, 1827; Pierre-Jean de Béranger, poet, 1857; Ned Buntline (Edward Zane Carroll Judson), western writer, 1886; Gottfried Keller, novelist and poet, 1880; Edmund-Louis Antoine Huot de Concourt, novelist, 1896; William Hamilton Gibson, illustrator, writer and naturalist, 1894; Sir Victor Alexander Haden Horsley, physician, 1916; Nicholas II, last Tsar of Russia, 1918; Alexandra (Alexandra Fyodorovna), Tsarina of Russia, consort of Nicholas II, 1918; Joseph Hilaire Belloc, writer, 1953; John Phillips Marquand, novelist, 1960. On this day: Brennus and the Gauls defeated the Romans at Alia, 390 BC; the Muslim Era began when Muhammad began his flight from Mecca

to Medina (The Hijra), 622; Captain John Gilbert patented the first dredger in Britain, 1618; the first banknotes in Europe were issued by the Bank of Stockholm, 1661; Mozart's opera *Il Seraglio* was first performed, Vienna, 1782; the District of Columbia was established in the United States, 1790; Sir Henry Havelock arrived at the Battle of Cawnpore, 1857; the Tsar of Russia (Nicholas II) and all his family were murdered by Bolsheviks at Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), 1918; the world's first parking meters were installed in Oklahoma City, 1935; the first atomic test bomb was exploded at Los Alamos, New Mexico, 1945; Leopold III, King of the Belgians, abdicated, 1951; the Mont Blanc road tunnel, between France and Italy, was opened, 1965; the Bill to abolish the Greater London Council received Royal Assent, 1965; British Airways and British Caledonian announced plans for a £237m merger, 1987. Today is the Feast Day of St Athanasius, St Eustathius of Antioch, St Fulrad, St Heli-er, St Mary Magdalen Postel, St Reinoldis.

LECTURES

National Gallery: Frances Homan, "Journeys (iii): the Earl of Arundel at home and abroad", 1pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Irene Logan, "French Earthenware Ceramics, 16th to 18th Centuries", 2pm. British Museum: Delia Pemberton, "Living in Egypt: then and now", 11.30am.

Tate Gallery: Andrew Kennedy, "Satire, Dream and Revolution: Dada and Surrealism", 1pm. National Portrait Gallery: Irene Luna, "The Court Favourite: George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, 1592-1628", 1.10pm.

DINNERS

HM Government: Lord Clinton-Davis, Minister for Trade, was the host at a dinner given yesterday evening at Lancaster House, London SW1, in honour of ECGD's Export Guarantees Advisory Council. Among those present were:

Ms E.Y. Argy, Mr A.K. Haney, Mr S.J. Daugherty, Mr R.T. Fox, Mr P.H.A. Harris, Mrs L. Knox, Mr G.W. Lynch, Mr R.H. Lloyd.

United Oxford and Cambridge University Club: Sir Nicholas Scott was the principal speaker of the United Oxford and Cambridge Club at a dinner held yesterday evening at the Club house, London SW1. His subject was "Governance in Northern Ireland". Mr Bruce Williams, Club Chairman, presided, and Lt-Gen Scott Grant, Commander, Royal College of Defence Studies, chaired the discussion.

VINTNERS' COMPANY

The following have been elected officers of the Vintners' Company for the ensuing year: Master, Mr P.E. Cooper, Upper Warden, Mr A.J. Buchanan, Renter Warden, Mr D.H. Butler Adams, Swan Warden, Mr H.J. Newton.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; No 7 Company Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Scots Guards.

Expert immune in respect of joint report

THURSDAY LAW REPORT 16 JULY 1998

Stanton and another v Callaghan and others
Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Nourse, Lord Justice Otton and Lord Justice Chadwick)
8 July 1998

A CLAIM for negligence and breach of retainer could not be brought by a party to pending proceedings against an expert whose evidence he proposed to call in the proceedings, where the claims were said to arise out of the expert's conduct in preparing, in conjunction with an expert instructed by the other party to the proceedings, a joint statement indicating which parts of the evidence which they respectively proposed to give at trial were or were not in issue.

The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal of the defendant consulting engineer against the refusal of his application to strike out the plaintiffs' statement of claim in an action in negligence, on the grounds that it disclosed no cause of action or alternatively was an abuse of the process of the court.

The defendant had been engaged by the plaintiffs to make a report on the subsidence which had occurred at their home. On the basis of that report, the plaintiffs made a claim against their insurers. That claim was rejected, and the plaintiffs commenced proceedings against the insurers.

The defendant was retained to provide expert advice in support of that claim. Following a meeting with the expert instructed by the insurers, a joint statement was prepared by that expert and the defendant, which contained an agreed solution to the problem. In the light of the matters which had been agreed with the insurers' expert, the defendant revised his draft report.

Shortly before trial of the action was due to commence, the

insurers increased the amount which they had paid into court. In the light of the evidence which the defendant was proposing to give, as set out in his final report and the agreed joint statement, the plaintiffs took the view that they had no choice but to accept the monies in court, and the action was thus settled.

The plaintiffs thereafter commenced proceedings against the defendant, alleging that he had acted negligently and in breach of implied terms in his contract of retainer. The defendant's application to strike out the plaintiffs' statement of claim under RSC Order 18 rule 19 was refused and the defendant appealed.

Rupert Jackson QC and David Soars (Wale Wadsworth, Bristol) for the defendants; Jonathan Coggins (Norman Savile & Co) for the plaintiffs.

Lord Justice Chadwick said that an expert witness who gave evidence at a trial was immune from suit in respect of anything which he said in court, and that immunity would extend to the contents

of the report which he adopted as, or incorporated in, his evidence. Where an expert witness gave evidence at a trial the immunity which he would enjoy in respect of that evidence was not to be circumvented by a suit based on the report itself.

The immunity did not extend to protect an expert, who had been retained to advise as to the merits of a party's claim in litigation, from a suit in respect of that advice by the party by whom he had been retained, notwithstanding that it was in contemplation that the expert would be a witness at the trial if that litigation were to proceed.

If an expert were to be immune from suit by the party retaining him in respect of the contents of a report prepared for the purpose of exchange prior to trial, in circumstances where he did not, in the event, give evidence at the trial, such immunity had to be founded upon some identifiable ground of public policy.

In order that court time should not be taken up in consideration of matters which were not truly in issue, experts were encouraged to identify, in advance of the trial, those parts of their evidence on which they were, or were not, in agreement. The public interest in facilitating full and frank discussion between experts before trial required that each should be free to make proper concessions without fear that any departure from advice previously given to the party retaining him would be seen as evidence of negligence, and that justified granting immunity.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

WORDS

WILLIAM HARTSTON
budget, n. or v.

Robert Walpole was the first Chancellor to have his statement called a budget when, in 1733, a pamphlet was published attacking his "political legerdemain"

under the title *The Budget Opened*. The intention was to compare Walpole with a charlatan opening his wallet of quack medicines, but budget was quickly adopted as the official term for a statement of the nation's finances. Oddly enough, one of the first to use it in that way was Robert Walpole's son, Horace.

My best friend is dying – how should I help him?

IT'S TERRIBLY easy to be overtaken by emotion when faced with something as big as the prospect of Aids. Every instinct cries out to a friend to be as helpful as possible – it might be their last chance. But the instinct has to be balanced with an interest in self-survival, for if Robin were to become ground down by his role, to become snappy and bitter, then he would have done more a disservice than a service.

A friend of mine, in a fit of generosity, let out her spare bedroom to a single parent she had met at a party who was covered in bruises from the battering she'd received from her husband. It all worked fine for a couple of weeks until the husband started staying over her flat, and threatening my friend as well as his wife. She began to live in fear, ended up hating the girl she'd invited in, and the final straw was when the husband bludgeoned his way back and started living there, too. It took weeks of unpleasantness and solicitors' letters to get them out.

Now it's highly unlikely that the outcome of Robin and John's arrangement would end so sadly, but having a sick person to stay, particularly a sick person who is more than likely going to continue to be sick, and get sicker, is a huge move to make and Robin must decide if he is really up to it. Just to move him in, like a sack of potatoes, and wait for him to rot, would be no good to anyone. I would suggest that he propose to John that he sets up a network of carers from his friends, each of which could look in on him

for an hour or so once a morning and once an afternoon. The more friends who could be persuaded to take part, the thinner the burden could be spread. Robin, as oldest friend, could perhaps visit every day, and stay one day at weekends, but though he would take on the administration of such a system, he would not take on the whole task of caring. HIV and Aids organisations would almost certainly be able to prove some helpers – there was a time a couple of years ago when there seemed to be almost more buddies and Aids counsellors than people with Aids themselves. For a week of every month, John would, if he were well enough, go back to Scotland to give everyone a respite, but he would be based in London.

Now it may be that John just longs for home at a time like this. He is just craving the sweet, heather-filled air; he longs to be surrounded by his family and the Scottish accents of his childhood. He longs to eat porridge and oatcakes and smoked venison, rather than crackers and cornflakes and steaks. Perhaps he feels certain he is on the way out and wants to return home where he began despite the fact that no one knows he is gay or even that he is ill. Perhaps he rather wants to get away from gay culture and red ribbons on lapels.

Even if this is what he decides, the fact that Robin has suggested a major plan to make his life more comfortable in London would make him feel enormously touched and happy, and if he goes to Scotland, he will go in the knowledge that if

he were to change his mind, he would have another "family" down South who were just as loving and eager to care for him as his own.

What readers say:

I AM struck by the fact that Robin has thought carefully about John's situation. It would be all too easy to dive in and make a genuine but ill-considered offer without thinking everything through.

I think Robin has to be careful not to let his own needs get in the way. He seems keen to be near John. Understandable, but is this the most important factor? What is very important is that John makes the best choices for himself in the remainder of his life. Does he really want to be with his parents? Is this in fact a constructive step because they ignore the fact he's gay and HIV positive? After knowing John for 18 years, Robin may have some insight into John's relationship with his parents.

I think Robin is quite within his rights to offer John an alternative to moving back to Scotland. However, he needs to weigh up the facts and the different perceptions of expectations which might be engendered in them both. He also needs to be prepared for the responses of "yes", "no", or "maybe", and their consequences. If "no", he has to let John go. It would at least give them the opportunity to discuss their circumstances at length. Given the gravity of the situation, and the fact that they have been friends for 18 years, I would like to

DILEMMAS



VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

DILEMMAS

36-year-old Robin has been platonic friends with John for 18 years. John is HIV positive and now that he is depressed and ill, he is thinking of going home to his parents in Scotland, who love him but refuse to accept either his sexuality or his illness. Robin's wondering if he should ask him to stay with him in London instead, near his friends and the latest treatment. But could he cope?

think that Robin and John can discuss this objectively without being manipulative.

NICHOLAS E GOUGH

JOHN MAY be gay and HIV+, he may be your friend of 18 years but before all of these he is a son in need of the embrace and support of his

family. The kindest thing you can do for John is to support his decision to return home.

His parents have found it difficult to come to terms with their son's sexuality and have been embarrassed to discuss the repercussions of his lifestyle choice, but they love him and accept him as their son.

The opportunity to nurse and be nursed will likely bring healing to the parent-child relationship and help each to come to terms with their grief.

The distance put between you and John and his illness will inevitably change your relationship with him but change need not mean broken: simply different.

As a long distance, long-standing friend, you could become for John the safe outlet for anger, pain and frustration that he will need in the dark days ahead. You will also be sufficiently removed to help his parents keep a perspective. Use your knowledge of the disease and the gay community to put them in touch with advice and support networks. You could also help by giving the carers much needed respite from time to time. (John will also appreciate respite from his carers.)

Worry less about your fear for what you cannot do and think more positively about what you can do to support your friend in his chosen new circumstances.

LYNDA EMES
Reading, Berks

YOUR DILEMMA grieves me beyond words; yet words are all I

have to try with. Your compassion is so great; yet you cannot know its efficacy on its stretching extent.

Could you earn for the both of you? Indefinitely? Could you pay for day-care while you were out grafting? Would your ailing friend be happy with the home you could immediately provided – let alone with long-term provision? After all, you've never before co-habited, have you?

Please suggest that he could stay with you for a few months, or a year, between his "selling-up" and his removal to Scotland. You make Scotland sound like the ends of the earth; but 200/300 miles? Nonsense! I'm not a Scot myself and know the culture is different; but I reckon the NHS is alive and very well just there. I visit my relatives as often as I can find the fare and the "get up and go" in my old age – about 3 times a year.

You could be a half-way-house between London and Scotland. Please invite his parents to stay with you and visit their son in your interim care. They might come out from being in denial of their son's condition and orientation.

His present decline need not signify the onset of full-blown Aids. It could be his own reaction to his own dilemma that depresses him and makes him neglect himself.

Please offer a short commitment (if he accepts it) and a hand-rail to his parents (if they accept it). More than that you cannot know to undertake.

Good on yer!
ANNE S CROCKER

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

Dear Virginia, My daughter always had what we thought was a very happy marriage until suddenly it was revealed that our son-in-law had had an affair. My daughter was beside herself with grief. She came to stay with us for a month with our grandchild, and when we'd looked after her, she felt strong enough to go home. Now she has told us she is giving him a second chance and taking him back. I have begged and begged her to think again. I cannot bear to imagine her so unhappy again and I have no doubt he will only continue having affairs, and making her miserable. There is no way I am having him to the house. I have explained to my daughter, after what he has done. But my husband disagrees. Has anyone else been in my situation? How do they cope? Yours sincerely, Angela

Letters are welcome, and every one who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from Interflora. Send comments and suggestions to Virginia Ironside, Features Department, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 6DL, fax 0171-293 2182, email dilemmas@independent.co.uk by Tuesday morning

A party's not a party without Elton, Mick, Salman, Tony and Cherie

Ever wondered why you never get invited to the best bashes in town? A list of Britain's most desirable party guests might give you a clue.

By Maureen Freely

THERE IS a scene in George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* when one of the heroes looks down from the roof of a shopping mall that is under siege by zombies and asks another, more knowledgeable hero why these zombies are so keen to break down the doors and get inside.

The answer is something along the lines of "They come here because they remember the mall was a very important place for them when they were alive".

I had cause to remember these words last Thursday, when I went to the launch for Roman Bennett's new novel *The Catastrophist*. For reasons that were not entirely clear to many of the guests, it took place in a long hallway on the ground floor of Bush House, the home of the World Service. Because of the usual BBC security measures at the main floor, it took about half an hour to gain entrance.

The party, when and if you found it, was relaxed and informal. Many of those in attendance were the author's personal friends. But you would not have known that from watching the waves of late arrivals who saw the party in full swing through the plate-glass windows of the side entrance, and tried to get through the revolving doors.

They seemed to lose all power of reason when the doors refused to budge. The idea that there might be another entrance did not even seem to occur to them. They just stood here, hurling themselves rhythmically against the glass, as if they had no choice over their movements. They looked at us inside with a haunted hunger, as if we had something that they knew to be of central importance, even though they could not remember what it was.

As the evening progressed, and moved on to other parties, I saw that same expression come and go in many other faces. Although just about everyone I met made a point of letting me know that they had been invited to at least three more parties than I had been, they all seemed convinced that the best party of them all, the one where all the most important people had been all along, was the one at the other end of the rainbow – and would be over before they got to it.

I am not sure where this delusion comes from. But we must all suffer from it, because there is no other way of explaining why *Tatler's* new list of the nation's 250 most wanted partygoers has caused such a commotion. The list makes no sense – and presumably this is why people find it so fascinating.

Elton John is a number one, and Mick Jagger shares his number three spot with Jerry, but the second most wanted guest is the transatlantic literary agent Ed Victor. The gallery owner Jay Jopling and his partner, the artist Sam Taylor Wood, make it into the top 10, as do Tony and Cherie. Hugh Grant, Liz Hurley and Salman Rushdie are in the top 20. Peter Mandelson is at No 25; Kate Moss is at No 29, Richard Branson at No 30...

Surely all these people do not go to the same parties? If they do, what in God's name do they find to talk about? If this is the sort of mix you have to endure once you are admitted to the jet set, then darling, I would rather walk.

For all we know, most of the Names mentioned above may feel the same way. The *Tatler* survey was about invitations, not acceptances. A spokesman for Elton John insists that he hardly goes out at all. He is a catch precisely because he is so hard to get. Which is not to say that the Chosen Few do not mind dreadfully if they are not asked. Susanna Johnston, author of *Parties: A Literary Companion*, reminds me that the Eltons of the world are just as insecure as the rest of us, perhaps even more so on account of having more to lose – and so "are frightfully pleased to have it confirmed that they are still famous".

They must have fun, too, deciding which parties to grace with their presence. But what trials they must endure if they choose the wrong one.

I once went to a rather ordinary newspaper do where all the guests were squished to one side, as if to avoid a contagious disease. When I made my way through the crowd to investigate, I found Mick Jagger standing there, looking lost and bored, with no one to talk to but his entourage. I gasped, as did the man standing next to me. I said nothing. The man standing next to me then said in a rather loud voice, "My God! He's so short."

Over the course of the next hour, I saw this scene repeat itself. I do not know how many times. At certain points there were so many speechless swooning women, and so many jealous men saying "My God, he is so short", that it sounded like a chorus. At the time I felt sorry for poor little Mick, but I have since been told that he was probably used to it, and that he probably even knew he had been invited to perform precisely that service.

According to Kathy Lette, an accomplished host and veteran



Elton John, the number one guest choice of the nation's hosts, according to those in the know

party animal, the best parties are the ones that serve up a good mix of talented, highly amusing people from many different walks of life. "plus one or two people from the pop world so that everyone else can have someone to look down on".

Another hostess, who wishes to remain nameless, insists that the best human ingredient of them all is an alcoholic. If he or she throws a little scene, "then everyone else goes home feeling an awful lot better, thinking, thank God it wasn't me."

"A party has failed unless it makes most of its guests feel superior," she adds. "There's all that snubbing that goes on in advance – asking all your enemies whether

they're going out, when you know full well they're not – looking around to see who's in and who's out, and who is making a fool of himself, and all the name-dropping you can do afterwards... but heaven only knows, none of those people are ever any fun."

Perhaps this is because they are not having fun. This is one of two things that I heard again and again from the few members of the chosen few who agreed to speak to me the other thing was "And by the way you can't say you've spoken to me". They go out and pretend to love going out because, in some way or another, it is a part of their job. Either they do it to make the right

contacts, or they do it because they have to be seen in the right places to stay on top. But they are not doing it right unless they work very hard to make it look as if it is not work.

So what is these people's idea of a good party?

This question invariably led to an outburst of sighs, and then sad but vague comments about "You know, the ones we all used to go to when we were younger, when there was a huge throng of people dancing, and all anyone wanted was to get laid." When you get older and started going to serious parties, the consensus was, dancing gave way to conversation and social climbing became more important than sex.

That is why the parties are so dreary, and so rarely live up to those hopes we all so stupidly entertain, flying in the face of the facts as we sit in our preparatory bubble baths agonising over what to wear.

According to Gill Hornby, the best idea is to give up on parties altogether. She is the inventor of glittering London's most serious alternative, the River Café Quiz.

These evenings are successful, she says, "because they provide a common purpose in the way that dancing once did, and conversation never will."

"Everyone is on the same wavelength, and when you deal with people at that level, an element of

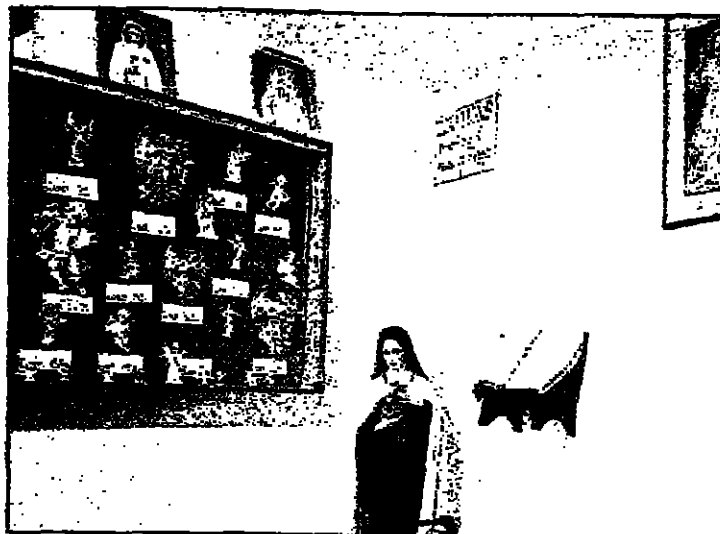
competition is essential if they're going to have a good evening."

Another good thing is that no one has the time to snub anyone. "People can't look over your shoulder when they're at a quiz."

I have heard that a number of people on that *Tatler* list are quiz regulars, but Gill insists that it is not exclusive. Only a set number of invitations goes out, but each person gets to ask five of his or her own friends. This creates a cosy and relaxed atmosphere, which is another reason why the quizzes are so popular. But they still cannot save me from the question I end up asking about all the best parties: why have I not been invited?



The view from the House of Prayer at Achill Sound, where Christina Gallagher brought pilgrims to share her visions of the Virgin. Above right, the souvenir shop; below right, Father Kenny, who raised the alarm David Rose



Visions of Mary and Mammon

ACHILL ISLAND stares out to the Atlantic, a western outpost teetering at the edge of the vast grey ocean. In the summertime clumps of pure white lilies and hedgerows of wild red fuchsias burn brightly against the brown heather land, intermingled with giant rhubarb plants, poisonous to the palate and alien to the eye. Despite its rugged mountains, its pale gold stretches of sand, its medieval peat bogs and its clear water inlets, few will ever visit this isolated Irish coastline.

At the far edge of County Mayo, it does not attract hordes of landscape-hungry tourists in the same way as Donegal or Kerry. It relies instead on its fishing, its farming and its religion.

Its 2500 residents scattered across the 52-square-mile island get some of their sustenance from 15 places of worship. It is a devout community: mass is held every day and 90 per cent of islanders attend church at least once a week. In Achill, as in many of Ireland's remote reaches, religion is woven closely into the fabric of life.

In 1993 Christina Gallagher, a married mother of two in her forties who claimed to have seen visions of the Virgin, bought a former convent in Achill Sound, a village at the mouth of the island. Her arrival set in motion a chain of events that has led this solid community to question its identity and spread mistrust among its neighbours.

Over the years Gallagher became a religious industry attracting between 200 and 500 people on pilgrimages every week, while generating hundreds of thousands of

pounds in revenue for the locals. The tourists spent their time, so witnesses say, in a religious frenzy, passing rosary beads through their fingers for hours on end.

Yet today, Christina Gallagher is opening the door of her so-called House of Prayer for the last time.

Sitting in his church just 50 yards away, Father John Kenny tries to make sense of the turmoil which in the name of God has driven a wedge through the village of Achill Sound.

"You know this all started so simply," says Father Kenny, staring at his mountain of paperwork on Gallagher's House of Prayer. "The previous bishop gave Christina her mission to open a small retreat for six or seven people as a place of quiet reflection and contemplation. He did not give her visions any kind of ecclesiastical recognition because it takes years for the Catholic church to check the validity of any claims, and even then it never becomes part of doctrine. He just thought her obvious religious devotion was very commendable and useful."

"But we ended up with something quite different, something that could split this community in two."

It was in 1985 in a County Sligo grotto that Gallagher first stepped into visionary shoes when she witnessed an apparition of Christ. As news of the increasingly miraculous visions spread from her County Mayo home across Ireland, a band of devotees clustered around Gallagher, including one Father Gerald McGinnity, who became her spiritual director, and interpreter of the visions.

In 1993, the year before the 36-year-old Kenny joined the rural parish, Gallagher bought and renovated the convent with donations

from her many devoted benefactors, spending between £75,000 and £200,000 to make the place habitable.

In the five years that the House of Prayer has been in existence, Gallagher's renown as a visionary with healing powers has grown. She has travelled extensively in the UK, North America and Australia, sprinkling her fundamentalist theology across the world.

Naneng Higgins, a 46-year-old Indonesian Muslim living in County Clare, suffered severe back pain as a result of a riding accident. After a single visit to the House of Prayer, she was apparently cured, and converted to Catholicism.

More chillingly, in her private press biography Gallagher tells of a woman allegedly healed of cancer by the House of Prayer. When the woman refused to recognise her cure as the work of God, she was struck down with a second illness, from which she died. Gallagher interpreted this as "a lesson not to take the gift from God but rather to proclaim it for His honour."

As the news of Gallagher's powers spread, the self-dubbed "ordinary woman" with visions was transformed into a money-spinning religious industry. More than 10,000 pilgrims flocked to her House of Prayer every year. The religious tourists revitalised Achill, previously condemned to the poor pickings of fishing, farming and an eight-week holiday season.

"There was an awful over-emphasis on the devil and purgatory and limbo up at the House of Prayer," says Father Kenny, lowering his voice. "It sends a very negative message about Catholicism. She was going back to an earlier way of representing our faith. You could

Christina Gallagher's House of Prayer brought thousands of religious pilgrims and their money to remote Achill Island. But the Church has condemned her as a fraud.
By Nicole Veash

say a personality cult was developing around her."

He was not the only clergyman to feel concerned. In 1996 a new Archbishop, Dr Michael Neary, investigated the increasingly controversial House of Prayer. With the full support of Gallagher, he set up an ecclesiastical commission examining the deluge of miracles, apparitions and claims of stigmata.

In December 1997 the Archbishop published his findings. He found "no evidence" of miracles and introduced a number of provisions to integrate the House of Prayer into Achill's own village community. He said that mass and confessions should only be held in the island's established churches - an attempt to steer Gallagher's shrine of devotion back to its original function as a low-key retreat.

It was these pronouncements that have led the quiet Achill enclave to turn in on itself with potentially explosive ferocity. Gallagher, on reading the findings, instantly appealed to Rome against the bishop.

For seven months an uneasy tension descended on Achill Island. The community debated, argued and in some cases sulked over the acrimonious split between the established Church and the fundamentalist visionaries.

Two weeks ago Gallagher went on national radio to announce the closure of the House of Prayer, shocking the Archbishop, who had no idea and no wish to see the House close.

"My heart is broken," Gallagher said. "I don't want any more battles about obedience to the Church. There were no negotiations with the bishop. Just dictation. My heart and soul have been stripped. I can't go on any longer. I just want some peace and quiet."

So public a denunciation has left Achill residents bitter and confused. The talk in the village shops and pubs is of little else. The collected business interests think they have been betrayed by the bishops.

Among them is Chris Connaughton. His Achill Sound Hotel overlooks one of the island's many Atlantic inlets. Its plain Seventies motel-style exterior nestles uncomfortably against the dramatic coastline.

"It's difficult for people to understand," he says, leaning over his fornicia reception. "Before Christian Gallagher came to Achill Sound we had to survive on an eight-week holiday season, and if the weather was dreary even fewer came to visit. When she arrived, dozens of beds and breakfasts sprung up and trade was

better than in our wildest dreams. "We bought most of our provisions from the local butcher and grocer, so they did well too. A lot of families have come to depend on Mrs Gallagher."

Martin McGreal, the local butcher, is also angry. "The bishop has no respect for us," he says. "The church doesn't seem to care that our businesses could go to the wall. I think they are jealous because she inspires such devotion, and has given Achill a greater standing with the world outside."

"Some are forgetting that the bishop's primary concern is for his parishioners' spirituality, and not their businesses," says Father Kenny. "Mammon is wreaking a lot of havoc."

The village whisperings are, it is true, all about money. Local businesses are not only concerned with Gallagher because their survival depends on her - they talk about her second home, built on the County Mayo mainland, with its security gates and high stone walls - unusual in this quiet rural spot.

"People might ask where all the money is coming from, but they shouldn't bother," says Chris Connaughton. "Mrs Gallagher has never asked for donations. She doesn't hand a plate round after mass like the local clergy. All this talk about money just obscures the main issue: that she's the one person who is trying to do Achill some good."

As the recriminations continue to eat into the soul of Achill, the woman at the heart of the controversy appears to have gone to ground.

At the pale grey House of Prayer, the blinds are drawn and the car park stands empty. When I knock at an incongruous conservatory at-

tached to the end of the convent, a young man with bleached blond hair comes to the door.

"I'm sorry, but the House of Prayer is closed and I can't help you," he says in a thick Lancashire accent. Eventually he reluctantly slides open the conservatory door and guides us into the House of Prayer shop.

"I suppose you can have a quick look round here," he says, pointing at a garish array of religious paraphernalia. Glass cabinets crammed with effigies fill the counters and the wall space, giving it the appearance of a discount jeweller's shop.

As at Lourdes or Knock, the price of devotion is not cheap. A clutch of amateurish videos, detailing Gallagher's visions, cost £15 a piece. Audio cassettes are £8 each, and you can buy the paperback biography for a tenner.

"Don't ask me about books or videos," says the lad. "I don't read things like that, but then I didn't need to be convinced about Mrs Gallagher. The moment I walked through the front gate a great calmness came over me. Before, I had a stressful life, but Mrs Gallagher gave me peace, and many other people too. I don't know how we will cope without the House of Prayer."

In the middle of last week, Christina Gallagher announced that the House of Prayer and its chapel, which no longer holds the blessed sacrament, would be reopening for its fifth anniversary celebration.

Thousands of vision-starved pilgrims are expected to flock to Achill Island, joining local residents in a religious demonstration in the name of Christina Gallagher. On the sideline the local clergy and the rest of the island will stand, just watching.

If you've got a title, flaunt it

EARLIER THIS week, while promoting the US premiere of his documentary *Crown and Country*, Prince Edward told a group of American journalists here in California that, unlike Britain, Americans don't have hang-ups about titles. "In Britain, if you've got a title, then you obviously don't have any brains," he said, "so there's no point talking about anything else."

It was a very flattering assumption about our culture. But, frankly, we are not that mature.

Americans revere titles. How else would Edward, the head of a small, independent production company plugging a show on a publicly funded network, draw as many reporters as the television convention's earlier press conferences featuring Jodie Foster and Jeremy Irons? What could make a bunch of jaded reporters tiptoe around hard questions and stumble over modes of address such as "the Prince", "your Royal Highness" and "Sir", despite his insistence on being simply "Edward Windsor"?

Because British royalty, titles and their surrounding pomp and circumstance fascinate us. At Edward's press conference, we loved sitting down to English high tea, trying to decipher cloyed cream, and curiously studying the cautious royal as if he were some moving Madame Tussaud's exhibit. While Edward's ability consistently to land programmes on American airwaves is a testament to his producing skills,

Prince Edward thinks abandoning his title will win him friends in meritocratic America. But why waste a good marketing tool? By Susan Karlin

and the downplaying of his regal lineage may be admirable, the bottom line is: it's kinda cool he's a prince.

See, to us, a title is not a class issue. It is a marketing gimmick.

Americans loathe the concept of monarchy on political principle, until we meet them. Then we give them their own television shows. PBS, the American network airing Edward's *Crown and Country*, would have been insane not to tap that promotional font. Nor, on a more commercial level, would Sarah Ferguson have landed a cameo on *Friends*, a bevy of Stateside talk shows and an ABC special, had she not been a duchess. But the very thing that seems to annoy the British - using your standing in life to advance career and connections - is what Americans respect.

Everyone's got a great book, screenplay, look, business idea - you name it. But not everyone has a hook. If you are lucky enough to be born with one, for God's sake, honey, work it. Who knows, you may even turn out to be talented. The goal is to make an entrance.

And if the genetic roulette wheel casts you on the wrong side of a castle wall, there is always the back-end title - one you get because you



Plain Edward Windsor

have offered a lifetime of talent: Sir Anthony Hopkins; Dame Judi Dench. This is easier to swallow for Brits because it is based on achievement. But its purpose is wasted on Yanks. The time for a title is at the beginning of a career, when you could use a little push.

It is like getting a gold watch at retirement. Great. Just when you do not have to be anywhere. To be honest, you really needed it all those years ago when you were young and

chronically late for job interviews.

In America, the closest thing we have to royalty and titles is celebrity. In their absence, we worship the powerful, the rich, the famous, the award-winning. And, on occasion, their progeny and bedmates. Remember Hugh Grant? These things have the same promotional oomph as titles and not to take advantage is downright un-American. John F. Kennedy Jr probably would not have landed a deal for his own political magazine unless he had happened to be the son of a US president. If Kim Basinger lives to be 100, she will never again issue a press release without the words "Oscar-winning actress" preceding her name.

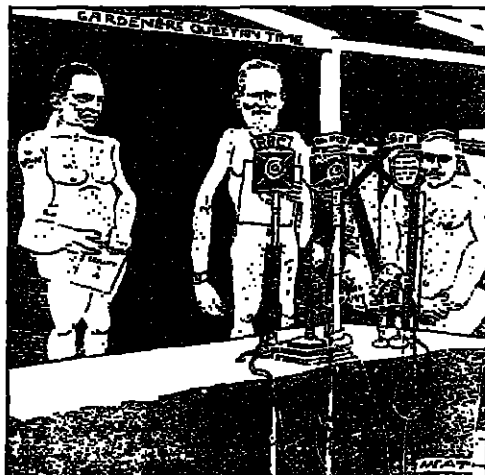
But celebrity is not the same as a title. It is theoretically available to anyone - just ask Monica Lewinsky. And it rarely lasts (just ask Monica Lewinsky after the next election). A title gets you into the pages of *Vanity Fair* any time. Moreover, it is something that Americans will never, ever be able to carry nearly as well as the Brits. Sorry, but the Duke of Brooklyn just does not have the same ring to it.

So, despite Edward's kind assessment of American mentality, we are just as conscious of titles as Brits, just less hostile about them. And now, 200-plus years after America rejected British monarchy, they have become our adopted media darlings. Somewhere, King George III is having a really good laugh.

POETIC LICENCE

NAKED GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME BY MARTIN NEWELL
ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL HEATH

This week, Gardeners' Question Time was recorded before an audience of 200 nudists at the Naturist Foundation near Orpington.



Caution pruning roses on a ladder
As the thorns may prove to be rapacious
Gruesome fates await the naked gardener
Cutting back the Blackthorns and Acacias

Bending down to tend the Rhododendrons
When replacing soil (ericaceous)
Keep allergic under-hangs from contact
With ranunculi and primulaceas

Guard against the holly-leaved Mahonia
Certain strains of Sumac and their juices,
Breasts and bottoms brushing on Laburnum,
And the Firethorn grown for screening uses

As for naked nudists with neighbours
In the garden, shed your inhibitions

But with due regard for good relations
Best consider putting up partitions

Rapid-growing conifers, once trendy
May promote the raising of objections
Pergolas, espaliers or panels
Are just three acceptable erections

Artichokes, rewarding in the winter
Will create a windbreak in the garden
Tips may be at risk from early frosts
Therefore keep exposed by day to harden

Finally, if nude when spraying or strimming
Goggles, gloves and groin-protector will do.
In the summer, check for damaged rootstock
And watch out for blackspot, rust and mildew

You can cry me a river

Death is not a common theme in children's fiction. But, says the author of 'River Boy', it's what life is all about. (No wonder the Swedes love him.) By Ann Treneman

Tim Bowler claims to be just another normal 44-year-old guy who happens to write dark, brooding books for children. But now that he has won the Carnegie Medal for his book *River Boy* – a dark, brooding novel about death – this claim must not be allowed to stand. "Look, I'm a normal person really," he says. "I am a vegetarian but that's about as weird as I get."

Then I present the evidence. Most damning, perhaps, is the fact that he is big in Belgium. "Yes, I am a minor celebrity in Belgium. I don't know why," he says. His first book *Midget* (about a boy whose older brother tortures him) even won an award there. Undoubtedly the Belgians see yesterday's decision by the Carnegie Medal judges as simply following their lead.

Then there are other things. He is an expert in the Swedish language. He knows a lot about squash. Then there is his photographic memory. At one point, he recites his class roll call from when he was 13. I say that I think this is strange, and he looks shocked. "I'm sure you can remember yours, too," I say that I cannot even remember who was in my class, much less the register, and he is quiet for a minute. "Well, I'm sure you could," he insists. "They were read out every day."

You see what I mean. His writing career is also unusual, to put it mildly. It began at age five, writing stories so short as to be haiku-esque (every chapter was just one sentence), about cowboys and Francis Drake and someone named Kurt the

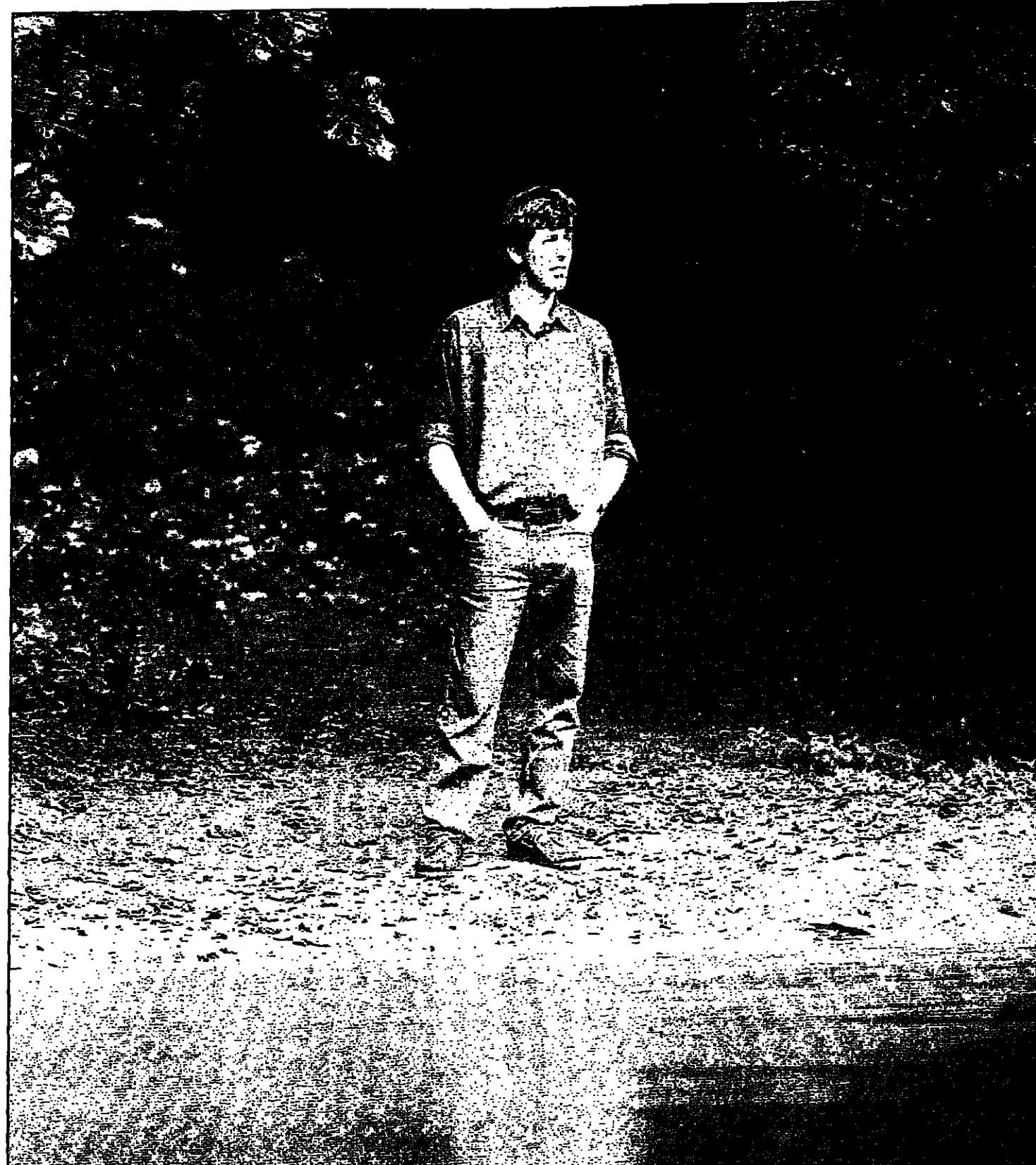
Viking. He wrote through primary school and grammar school in Leigh-on-Sea.

At East Anglia University, he began night-writing. "I worked between 11pm and 4am. That was weird and that was in secret. I just found I was attracted to the quiet hours. It was poetry mainly. I was pretty rubbish poetry, in my view," he says and then promptly recites a poem that he wrote at that time. "I think that's awful. But it's like music, isn't it? Take the theme tune of *The Archers*. Don't you just hate it? But if you put that bloody music on, it starts going round in your head."

He worked as a teacher and a translator but never stopped writing. It took 10 years of night-writing to produce his first book. "I wrote most of it in a flat in Strawberry Hill at 3 o'clock in the morning. The only place where I could write on a typewriter and not wake my wife was this box room, which was too small even to put a heater in. So I would be sitting there in a sleeping bag with another blanket round me and a Thermos flask, typing this bloody novel, and thinking 'What the hell am I doing this for?' I mean, no one had asked me to write a book."

He rewrote that book nine times. "I worked it out, it's only a short book, 45,000 words or something, and I wrote well over half a million to get there. The first draft was 85,000 words and everything went in the bin, other than 200 words which were about a dog. I rewrite and rewrite. But I'm getting better."

He is, although that may be because he gave up night hours a few



'Most of the best parts come incidentally. I've learned that you ignore them at your peril,' Tim Bowler says

John Voos

years ago and started writing as his main job (though he still translates Swedish – his favourite language of the six that he speaks). He and his wife have left London and live in a tiny village in Devon. So now, he says, he gets up at 5.30 every day to write. "In the morning?" I ask, appalled, and he nods happily.

Perhaps that is why his second book (also dark and brooding) only took three years to write. *River Boy* took him a year and only three rewrites. It is the story of a 14-year-old girl named Jess coming to terms with the death of her cantankerous grandfather. Water is a theme: she is a swimmer and her grandfather was too as a boy. Now he and the family have gone back to his boyhood home where he insists on painting the river that runs alongside it. Jess helps him do this, and in the process, starts to believe in a river ghost of sorts.

Tim Bowler lost his own grandfather when he was 14, but says that is where any similarity with Jess ends. He says he just wanted to write about death because it's one of life's great mysteries. The story arrived, as all of his do, in bits and pieces during the rewriting. "Most of the best parts come incidentally. They pop up like something out of a toaster. I've learned from experience that you ignore these things at your peril. If you do ignore them, you don't get what Truman Capote called the unexpected dividend. I'm not a plotter, I'm a plunger. I can't do plots. I think it's PD James who has a flow chart on the wall. That's great for her, but for me any plots that I've worked out have gone out the window by page 10."

River Boy is for children ages 12 and up but, even so, breaks most of the rules. The pace is not exactly snappy, for starters. "It is slow mov-

ing, but it was meant to move at the speed of a river." And, as for the plot, even Tim admits that it is a bit of a disaster in traditional boy's adventure terms. "Well, let's see. It's about someone who dies. The main character is a girl. And there's a bit of a ghostly quality to it and a lot of description of nature and a river and, oh, there's a lot of swimming in it too. There's no baddy and no one gets killed. But what I know from the feedback I get is that they are reading it and reading it in one sitting."

And crying. Everyone – boy, girl, man, woman – cries over *River Boy*. It's one of those books where the tears just start to flow after a while with no obvious trigger. This is true for Tim as well, who still cannot read from the last 40 pages without weeping (and therefore does not read from that part in public).

By the end of the interview, I think that I've convinced Tim Bowler

that he may be a little bit unusual, but then I mention it again and we are right back to the beginning.

"Weird? I would say it was a deeply interiorised life. Most of us have our daily existence, when you pay mortgages and clean the car and do the things that many people do. But it doesn't alter the fact that most of us live a secret inner life. Some people express that in writing or painting. Writing is one of the things that drives me, but it's not the only thing. It comes second to my wife or family. I once read a story about some writer who was taking notes while his father was dying or something. Well, that's not me."

River Boy is the winner of the Carnegie Medal, which is awarded by the Library Association and sponsored by Royal Mail. Published by Oxford University Press at £5.99.

RIVER BOY

AN EXTRACT FROM
TIM BOWLER'S NOVEL



IT DIDN'T start with the river boy. It started, as so many things started, with Grandpa, and with swimming. It was only later, when she came to think things over, that she realised that in a strange way the river boy had been part of her all along, like the figment of a dream.

And the dream was her life. Half-past nine in the morning and the pool was crowded already. That was the down-side to summer holidays, especially hot ones like this, but she knew she shouldn't grumble: she'd been here since six-thirty, together with the usual hardcore of serious swimmers, and she'd managed a leisurely four miles without interruption.

She heard Grandpa's voice calling her.

"Keep going, Jess!" She glanced up at him as she flashed by, and smiled to herself. She knew what "keep going" meant. Dear old Grandpa: he'd only been here twenty minutes and he was bored already...

Grandpa called out again. "Everything's fine, Jess. Keep going."

She kicked off the wall and headed back down the pool, suddenly desperately uneasy. Something was wrong but she couldn't work out what it was. His words rang in her head: everything's fine, everything's fine. And yet there was something in the very contrariness of Grandpa that told her he was trying to conceal something. He was such a stubborn, prickly old man, he would always say everything was fine.

Especially when it wasn't. She broke her stroke and stopped, treading water, and searched for Grandpa. There he was, still standing by the shallow end, watching the children. He looked all right; no different from before. Just bored. Perhaps she was imagining all this. He saw her and raised a hand to wave.

Then to her horror, clutched it over his heart and crashed into the pool.

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THEATRE

DR DOLITTLE
LABATT'S APOLLO
HAMMERSMITH
LONDON

Music. Indeed the whole score feels secondhand. Dolittle's impassioned courtroom song questioning why we don't respect animals should have vegetarians making block bookings but there's no getting away from the fact that it's lyrically lazy and wholly indebted to



Phillip Schofield shines

"Why Can't the English" from *My Fair Lady*, a song made famous by Rex Harrison who later played Dolittle in the film. Composer and lyricist Leslie Bricusse has written streams of hits but this score, despite winning a Best Song Oscar for "Talk to the Animals" is overextended with dull ballads.

If Aletta Collins' choreography was halfway decent you might not notice, but this is the production's only serious failing. You keep waiting for the adrenaline rush of great dance

but it never arrives. The operatic baritone John Rawnley has a ball singing "I've Never Seen Anything Like It" but the chief reason for disbelief is watching all this dance potential turn into a costume parade.

Yet with costumes as good as this, you almost don't care. The dream sequence in particular alludes to the original book's illustrations but together with the wildly inventive sets, the whole look and feel of the show is imbued with joyful theatrical life. The doctor's higgledy-piggledy house becomes a beguiling ship rolling in the waves of a superbly lit storm but the show's not-so-secret pleasure is spotting the animals crammed into every nook and cranny of the set. As created by Jim Henson's Creature Shop, everything from the gloriously realised Giant Pink Sea Snail to a particularly entrancing pig gives you the warmth and wit of *The Muppet Show*. There's even a special guest appearance by Julie Andrews, who pops in to voice to the parrot.

It's undeniable that Pimlott and his team can, er, do little with Bricusse's inconsequential book. However, they actually manage to undercut his absurdly conventional romantic plot and are not ashamed to take a theatrically sophisticated aim at children's hearts. So who better to cast than Phillip Schofield? He can do beaming naivety in his sleep, but his sense of enjoyment is extraordinarily infectious, as is the whole show. Grab a kid and go.

Box office 0870 606 3400. A version of this review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper.

DAVID BENEDICT

Thumpingly absurd

THEATRE

HERAKLES
THE GATE
LONDON

"EVERYTHING CHANGES," declares Amphitryon, father of Heracles. "One day we're down, the next we're up." Well, did you ever? Granted, you don't look for originality in a play nearly 2,500 years old, but nor do you expect Euripides to stoop to quite this level of banality.

For the first 10 minutes or so of Nick Philippou's production, it seems obvious why Heracles has never been ranked high among Euripides' output, but has been dismissed as a simple melodrama. You are quickly disabused of this notion, though, in this production, dedicated to the memory of its translator, Kenneth McLeish, who died at the end of last year. Heracles emerges as a startling piece of theatre.

When the action starts, Heracles is missing, presumed dead, after descending to the Underworld to steal the three-headed dog Cerberus. With him out of the way, the Theban dictator Lykos intends to murder Heracles' wife Megara and their children, who have taken refuge with Amphitryon at the temple of Zeus Protector. As designed by Stewart Laing, this is a platform at one end of the stage with exposed wires and paper pasted to the walls, giving it the appearance of a squat.

Megara and Amphitryon, in shabby modern dress, argue over the best way to approach a doom that seems inevitable. The first half ends with Heracles' return, the slaying of Lykos (a shocking amount of off-stage thumping and screaming) and a chorus of gimlet-eyed elderly Thebans expressing their joy in a deranged Busby Berkeley-style dance routine.

What follows is a striking example of the reversal of fortune

that the Greeks were so keen on: Heracles has made an enemy of Hera, who now sends the minor deity Madness to visit him; driven insane, he kills his wife and children (more thumping). The rest of the play is taken up with Heracles coming to terms with the disaster.

The play has its longeurs, and the staging does not always help – in particular, the raising of the entire back wall of the auditorium to reveal the scene of carnage that follows Heracles' madness should be a moment of revelation; but the

process takes so long that tension is replaced by tedium. McLeish's translation, in trying to respect Euripides' comparatively modern diction, does sometimes lapse into banality.

For the most part, though, it has a consciousness that serves the play well, and Philippou manages to convey the absurdity of the plot without diminishing its horror. And that sentence, "Everything changes. One day we're down, the next we're up" – has come to seem less like a truism than a truth, a piece of reason to cling to in a terrible world.

Heracles continues at The Gate, London, booking to 1 Aug (0171-225 0706)

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FILM

Hollywood puts its foot in it

THE BIG PICTURE



RYAN GILBEY

GODZILLA (PG)
DIRECTOR: ROLAND EMMERICH
STARRING: MATTHEW BRODERICK, JEAN RENO
RUNNING TIME: 139 MINS

New York is in turmoil. The roads are crammed with ordinary people scooping out their own eye sockets in disbelief. The police attempt to restore order, yet even they know that the Big Apple may never recover. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Tina Brown has left the building. And, on a less serious note, there is also an enormous lizard rampaging through the city, avoiding only certain parts of Brooklyn where even a 400-ft-high nuclear reptile would not be foolish enough to tread.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the new version of *Godzilla* is that, even as Madison Avenue is being razed store by store, killing thousands and making the journey home a real bummer for commuters, you find your thoughts straying to more trivial matters. Such as: I bet there is still somewhere among the rubble where you could get a salmon bagel. And: where on earth is poor Woody Allen going to relocate to now?

In fact, it is a pity that the film does not make more of its unique location, once *Godzilla* has decided to settle there because of the skyscrapers, which will hide him, and the wealth of avant-garde theatre, which will keep him stimulated. Maybe *Ghostsbusters II* has already used up the best New York gag by having the city's collective mean spirit transformed into a toxic goo rolling through the subways. Still, there is a nice moment early on when someone feels the first tremors from *Godzilla's* footsteps and says: "Don't tell me it's another parade," with a seen-it-all sigh. But if it were not for the occasional landmark having clumps knocked out of it - there goes the Chrysler Building; oops, that was the Brooklyn Bridge - then, for all you knew, it could be North Acton beneath that relentless rain and endless night.

The darkness also serves a cosmetic function, muddying the picture's not-so-special effects. The original *Godzilla*, who bumbled through Japanese science-fiction adventures from 1954 onwards, was a man in a rubber suit. The 1998 model has been arrived at through a combination of CGI, miniatures and animatronic models, but terror has not increased with the technological capabilities. This is partly down to the studio, which demands, reasonably enough, that when a



The biggest problem with the monster is that, even as New York is razed to the ground, you find your thoughts straying to more trivial matters

budget rises, so the potential audiences must soar accordingly to recoup costs; as with *Jurassic Park*, a PG-rating will have been a condition of *Godzilla* before a word of the script was even typed.

Even so, on the few occasions when you can see the monster, you may wish you could not. A master animator such as Ray Harryhausen was always just as interested in what a creature looked like as the degree of havoc it could wreak. Modern effects have replaced Harryhausen's jerky stop-motion with lithe, ballistic movements, but the identity has been bled out at the conception stage, too.

There is nothing very striking about this *Godzilla*. If it reminds you of anything as it climbs wearily from the city sewers, it will be a crabby old man struggling out of

bed on a December morning. Even the scaly skin, bad gums and talon-like toenails are the same. It also has very bad posture. Is there not something fundamentally wrong with a monster movie in which you are drawn only to notice adverse curvature of the spine? Where is its personality? Where are its idiosyncrasies? It may be more honest not to shoe-horn the creature into an anthropomorphic template, but who cares about honesty when you are dealing with men outrunning mutant reptiles on flooded streets and slippery jetties?

Indeed, the closest that the film comes to engaging you is when the scientist, Nick (Matthew Broderick), photographs *Godzilla* with a disposable camera, and the monster leans in, seeming to smirk and

preen like a starlet teasing a persistent paparazzo.

Cameras are everywhere in the movie. There is Nick's itchy-bitsy fun camera, which survives the carnage and destruction - that is the power of product placement for you. The combination of TV reporters and possible apocalypse offers potential for dry satire and dumb action, as demonstrated by *The Man with the Deadly Lens*, and with the apparent omnipresence of a go-getting cameraman who goes by the name of Animal (Hank Azaria), *Godzilla* seems to be travelling in the same direction. Animal can stand directly in *Godzilla's* path, safe in the knowledge that he will not be trampled, as though his press accreditation somehow makes him immortal.

Meanwhile, the rest of the char-

acters are judged by their proximity to the TV camera. A French secret service agent (Jean Reno) is allowed unconditional purity, since he has nothing to do with the media. Then there is Charles Caiman (Harry Shearer), a slimy reporter who is putting the moves on his assistant, Audrey (Maria Pitillo), who in turn still yearns for Nick. Whatever happened with her and Nick?

"You left without a phone call," he complains.

"That was eight years ago," she replies.

"People change."

That clears that up, then.

Anyway, *Godzilla's* attack on New York turns out not to be such a terrible thing after all. As with disaster movies, the catastrophe in question is both a manifestation of ugly human desires and, eventually,

the catalyst for redemption. *Godzilla* is born in the fall-out from nuclear testing, and in attempting to vanquish the monster, the film's characters learn about themselves. Audrey decides she has had enough of Charles, and quits her job. A gruff sergeant manfully holds back a tear and praises one of his charges: "That was one hell of a job, soldier."

But the fondness of the director, Roland Emmerich, for such wacky digressions has deserted him this time out. Along with his producer and co-writer Dean Devlin, Emmerich has been responsible for some agreeably silly modern B-movies, including *Stargate* and *Independence Day*, though their sense of fun is only fleetingly evident in *Godzilla*.

But there is something pompous in the film's fetishistic worship of military hardware, and in the tour of New

York's ruins. When Nick chances upon the collapsed sign for Madison Square Garden, Emmerich cranks up the solemn score as though this were a moment of profound despair, like the Statue of Liberty scene in *Planet of the Apes*. It is not, of course. The building survives, inhabited by thousands of *Godzilla's* bloodthirsty offspring - honestly, the Garden has not seen this many slimy old reptiles since the last time Fleetwood Mac played there. And down in the stalls are the eggs that the monster has laid, like any titan fearful of its own extinction, whether it is movie-makers desperate to transform a film into a franchise, or media royalty vacating a throne.

With this in mind, perhaps Tina Brown's enemies may now feel compelled to comb the skirting-boards at their earliest convenience.

ALSO SHOWING

LIFE IS ALL YOU GET WOLFGANG BECKER (18) ■ **THE THIEF** PAVEL CHUKRAI (15) ■ **BARNEY'S GREAT ADVENTURE** STEVE GOMER (U) ■ **THE LITTLE MERMAID** RON CLEMENTS/JOHN MUSKER (U)

Even 'Twin Peaks' wasn't this bizarre

LIFE IS ALL YOU GET takes place in that no-man's-land where Ken Loach overlaps with Bertrand Blier in the Venn diagram of cinema. The film begins with a violent riot. Into the chaos stumbles Jan (Jurgen Vogel), a young butcher who has been having himself fiddled with while Berlin burns. He leaves his lover's bed for work, gets tangled up with Vera (Christiane Paul), inadvertently thumps two plain-clothes policemen and earns himself a night in the cells. The next day, his girlfriend reveals that she is HIV-positive. If I told you that the film develops into a piercingly funny black comedy about life before death, you might think that my perception had been fogged by popcorn fumes. Not so. The writer/director Wolfgang Becker mixes the grim with the goofy, and although the picture is flecked with skew-whiff humour, you never get the feeling that he is trying to sweeten a bitter pill; this is just the way he sees the world.

The Berlin which he depicts is peopled by characters who would have been exiled from *Twin Peaks* for being too eccentric. The absurdity does not seem studied, and it is often undercut by intangible menace, as befits a film where death pops up on every corner. Hiding out in a stranger's flat, Jan and Vera hear torturous sounds coming from down the hall, but it is only a man in a blindfold listening to horror videos and trying to guess their identity by the screams. There are shopping mall Santas in hideous rubber masks, while a particular delight is a rain-drenched funeral beneath the autobahn, where the mourners grimace as the coffin sinks into its flooded grave.

The cumulative effect of these details is to disorient the viewer, though Becker never forgets that the characters whom he has stranded in this unforgiving landscape are real human beings (even the slightly creepy Teddy boy Buddy, played by Ricky Tom-

linson, speaking German but badly dubbed). *Life is All You Get* is something strange and wonderful indeed - a gallows comedy that leaves you feeling warm even as the tightening noose chafes your neck.

In *The Thief*, the writer/director Pavel Chukrai tries for that brand of unforced.

A gallows comedy that leaves you feeling warm even as the tightening noose chafes your neck

blank-faced poetry pioneered by Louis Malle in *Lacombe Lucien*, and by Tarkovsky in *Ivan's Childhood*, though he does not quite pull it off. The point of those films was that they did not steer the audience toward the resonances - they let the depths reveal them-

selves. Chukrai does too much of the work for you: his film is most striking when it rests on intimation, such as when it is building the relationship between the six-year-old Sanya (Misha Philipchuk) and his mother's lover, Tolyan (Vladimir Mashkov), who wears a soldier's uniform but carries a kit-bag bulging with crockery and cutlery looted on his travels around Fifties Russia. He is the thief of the title, but he has filched more than just other people's goblets - he has stolen the heart of Katya (Ekaterina Rednikova) and the innocence of her little boy, too.

Chukrai lets the story unfold at its own pace until the final 15 minutes, when he does himself a grave disservice by tying up the loose ends and sending us home with all mysteries solved.

Younger viewers too sensitive to brave *Godzilla* get their own monster in *Barney's Great Adventure*, though Barney the wacky Day-glo dinosaur is arguably the more disturbing creation. The ingredients are

the same as in *Barney's* sickly pre-school learning videos: nursery rhymes sung by horribly well-adjusted children with embalmed smiles. The emphasis on using your imagination is healthy, though there is a worrying absence of conflict, even *Sesame Street* conceded that people do not get along all the time. Still, my four- and five-year-olds lapped up every second of it, and on this occasion you should probably listen to them.

Personally, I prefer *The Little Mermaid*, Disney's film of the Hans Christian Andersen story, which is re-released this week. In 1990, this movie rejuvenated the studio's ailing animation industry, which was then considered to be past its prime. But *The Little Mermaid* changed all that. It has everything: snazzy songs, inventive compositions and one of the few movie heroines who can give her measurements as 36, 24 and 36p-a-pound.



RYAN GILBEY Christiane Paul as Vera in 'Life is all You Get'

Greg Mottola went back to his childhood for his debut feature about a suburban family's ride into town, and cast up-and-coming Parker Posey as the laid-back sister. Liese Spencer met the director, while James Mottram spoke to the prize-winning actress

An unholy estate

IT WAS in the family car, on a visit to some relatives one Christmas, that the American director Greg Mottola experienced what he calls a "Twilight Zone epiphany". "I was sitting, looking at the back of my parents' heads, and they were addressing me and my brother as though we were still children," he recalls. "It was surreal. In a short span, our whole family history revived itself. I started to think about how, after a certain age, the family dynamic gets stuck in a time warp."

Back in his New York apartment some weeks later, Mottola channelled his experience into a first feature called *The Daytrippers*, which is released next week. It sees a suburban clan sardined into the family station wagon for a comic study of stalled relationships. Written with intelligence and humour, Mottola's winning debut swaps the soft-top escapism of most road movies for a claustrophobic study of everyday, nuclear dysfunction.

Not that the director would be pleased to see his story described as such. "I remember hearing some expert claim that 97 per cent of all families are dysfunctional," writes Mottola in his press notes for *The Daytrippers*, "and it made me think of two things: first, that the word 'dysfunctional' is meaningless, since it pertains to almost every living human; secondly, who are the freaks that make up that 3 per cent of 'functional' families?"

Such impeccable reasoning suggests a fastidious academic from New York's Upper East Side, and on first sight Mottola certainly cuts an ascetic figure, all white skin and

bone, with steel-rimmed spectacles and a shiny bald head. Instead, he turns out to be a genial, unassuming character who grew up in New York's comfortable commuter dormitory of Long Island, before going to art school to experiment with his first black-and-white shorts.

"Some were little, neo-realist stories," he cringes, "and some were the classic 'I'm a junior in college, I'm really depressed, I'm going to make a movie about suicide'. Totally indulgent. Un-speakably bad." Happily, despite such student atrocities Mottola's enthusiasm and talent won him a place at Columbia Film School, where he found himself being taught by such luminaries as Sydney Lumet and David Mamet.

"With Sydney Lumet we'd meet once a week and he'd tell us stories about working with Al Pacino in *Serpico* and that kind of thing," recalls Mottola. "With David Mamet it was sort of a workshop, sort of a lecture and sort of David Mamet working out his aggression against students. He's the smartest person I've ever met, but maybe not the warmest. He would say, 'you do not impress me at all, and until you do I'm not going to be nice to you'. By the end of the semester none of us had impressed him."

Mottola's work did, however, impress the *Sex, Lies and Videotape* director Steven Soderbergh, who offered to produce his first feature. Mottola wrote a screenplay for a *Dolce Vita*-style film called *Lush Life*. "It was an ambitious first movie, and it became clear that no one was going to give me the kind



Greg Mottola, (left), directs Campbell Scott on the set of 'The Daytrippers'

of money I needed to get it made," says Mottola. "So one day, Steven and his co-producer, Nancy Tannebaum, said, 'you know, if you can think of something that can be done really cheaply, we'll give you

'97 per cent of families are dysfunctional. Who are the freaks of the three per cent of 'functional' families?'

money from our own pockets - \$30,000 to \$30,000 to get you started."

The same week, Mottola turned 30 and decided it was time for action. "I looked at my notes for *The Daytrippers* again and I thought, 'I can write this quickly. These are

people I know.'" Eschewing Columbia's conservative blueprint for "tight stories with perfect pay-offs", Mottola drafted a "messy psychological story" about a woman (Hope Davis) who discovers a mysterious love letter to her husband and travels, with her family, from the suburbs to the city to confront him.

When it came to casting, Mottola's twenties spent bumming around on the New York film scene paid off, since he was already friends with some of the finest independent actors around. With Stanley Tucci on board as Davis's husband, Ann Mearns as her overbearing mum, Parker Posey as her sulky student sister and Liev Schreiber as Parker's pompous boyfriend Carl, all that was left was to dream up a title for his production company. Mottola dubbed it "Fiasco Productions".

On the first, bitterly cold day of filming, Mottola's camera was stolen before filming had even started. Over the next 15 days of his cash-starved, \$65,000 shoot, Ann Mearns was to sweat out a 101-degree fever on set, while Hope Davis would trip over gaffer tape, spraining both ankles so badly that she needed crutches. Somehow Mottola managed to keep it all rolling, although he began to regret setting so many of his scenes in the car, as it simply was not big enough for both the cast and the crew to fit inside.

After a year of post-production, *The Daytrippers* was finally finished, only to be rejected by the Sundance Film Festival - a decision Mottola believes to have been rooted in the class-consciousness of the US indie scene. "Only movies that mercilessly mock the middle

class are cool. It's not thought right to show that you like them."

The Daytrippers, he says, is more interested in lambasting such inverted snobbery. "The whole point of the Carl character is that he's so

He began to regret so many scenes in the car as both cast and crew could not fit in it

appalled at coming from an ordinary, middle-class background that he invents this utterly ridiculous persona," smiles Mottola. "He's an absurd exaggeration of people I knew growing up at film and art school, who were wildly preten-

tious because they couldn't bear the idea of being square."

No "son of heroin addicts" himself, Mottola confesses to going through his own period of "reinvention", before returning to his bourgeois roots. "I really believe that it's important to try to understand people in your family and have them understand you," he says. "It's all very tedious and unpleasant, but I think that it pays off."

A certain level of domestic understanding certainly helped Mottola. Mum and Dad not only provided the inspiration for his story, but also offered their home as a location, cooked cast and crew lasagne and even appeared as extras.

With the movie's success, their son looks set for a film career that will take him a little further away from home.

An Indie Queen in Tinseltown

ANY ACTRESS who would pay half her air fare to get to the set of a film, or lend the producers her credit cards to charge rental cars to, cannot be in it for the money. The intriguingly named Parker Posey gives just this impression - a school-girl who flirts in an adult world.

"It's play for me, work and play. It's fun for me to work so much. It's fun to go into movieland, to think about other characters and stories. I get to dress up and play. You get to just sorta hang out on movie sets; no one's bored of it yet."

At 29, Posey, having appeared in night on 30 independent films (five in 1991 alone), shows no signs of boredom, despite being the hardest-working unknown in the business.

Such dedication has begun to pay off, though, with increasing media attention in the US - not that it matters a jot. She was branded "Queen of the Indies" by *Time*, but her brusque "I don't know, I don't care" reply as to her response to this indicates the importance she gives it.

"I prefer 'Indie Tramp' - it seems more appropriate. A tramp tramps along. A tramp is a sleaze. I work; this is what I do. You don't know what's going to happen when you follow a certain instinct. You can't know where it's going to take you."

Her work, most notably for the indie veterans Richard Linklater (*Dazed and Confused*, *SubUrbia*), Hal Hartley (*Amateur*, *Flirt*) and Gregg Araki (*The Doom Generation*), takes her to extremes that most people will not try.

With a penchant for working with first-time directors (Noah Baum-

back on *Kicking and Screaming*; Julian Schnabel on *Basquiat*), Posey is by nature a risk-taker, a dark beauty with the ability to punch verbally and seduce visually.

In Greg Mottola's bittersweet dysfunctional family comedy *The Daytrippers* she plays Jo, grungy but all-seeing sister to Eliza (Hope Davis), who suspects her husband (Stanley Tucci) of infidelity. En masse, the family - including Posey's ultra-pretentious boyfriend Liev Schreiber - pack the station wagon to track down the wayward hubby. It is a role in which the waif-like Posey sits back, chews gum and generously allows the stronger characters to flourish, while she slyly undermines them all.

"All families create their own dramas," notes Posey, who won a Special Jury Prize at last year's Sundance Film Festival for her work on another suffocating family piece, *The House of Yes*, in which she played a Jackie Onassis obsessive. "The power that the family has over each other. They love so much they end up doing the wrong thing because they want to control someone, make it all right. That's what happens in *The Daytrippers*."

Her own family life was as much of a mixed bag as her career. Posey was born in Baltimore, where her father was stationed in the army, and was named after the Fifties model Suzy Parker. She was born three months premature, and spent the first six weeks in an incubator.

Quite what this isolation did for her is hard to say, but by the time she was 10, her family showed concern:



Parker Posey (far right) as the grungy but all-seeing Jo

K C Bailey

"My parents thought I had a learning disability because I was such a day-dreamer. They said I had a short attention span, and I still do." Her constant stretching and leg-crossing, as if preparing to be a mischievous Puck, testify to this.

She grew up in the Deep South, spending time in Monroe, Louisiana, - with her grandmother, who called her "Missy" - and her teen years in Laurel, Mississippi, the home town of Blanche Dubois, where her father still owns a Nissan car dealership.

She was the pseudo-Goth surrounded by Prom-Queen wannabes. Not that it dented her career ambi-

tions, though typically she claims acting is "just something I fell into".

She auditioned for the dance programme at the prestigious North Carolina School of Arts, only for her father to be told that she should become an actress, as a dancer's life was tough. She majored in acting at SUNY Purchase in New York (where she was kept on "probation" by various teachers throughout most of her four years there) and shared a room with *ER*'s Sherry Stringfield, capturing her own prize soap role three weeks before graduation, on CBS's *As the World Turns*.

Featured roles came in *Armistead*

Maupin's TV mini-series *Tales of the City*, and films such as *The Coneheads* and *Party Girl* kick-started her screen career, but talking about it just does not hold her attention.

"What's really interesting about my work is reading a script and thinking, 'Oh my God, this has happened to me in my real life! The synchronicity of how all parts connect is fascinating. The life a movie takes on when you're working is wild. You start to project stories...'"

She breaks off for a second. "You're asking all these questions and I really don't have pat answers. The attention-span thing comes

into play again, her mind jumping through a myriad subjects as she pulls a lash from my eye.

"The movie affects you," she continues, calm once more. "You think about what a story's about all the time. It doesn't leave you. It's in you. True life is shaded by the story you've been thinking about all day at work. It's wild fantasy, real life and the projections you make."

Fantasy for the moment includes launching her own online, five-day journal (www.ilmetid.com), and a mock diary called "The Incredibly Hilarious, Possibly True and Potentially Libellous Stories from the Set of *SubUrbia*", in which she rips the insular and insecure world of actors to shreds with a sand-dry wit as evident online as in her conversation.

Meanwhile, for Posey, real life consists of a split between living in her Manhattan apartment and jetting around the globe to be with her Irish actor boyfriend Stuart Townsend (they met when *The House of Yes* and *Resurrection Man* premiered on the same night at last year's London Film Festival).

Films such as Christopher Guest's small-town mockumentary *Waiting for Guffman* and Brian Skeet's *The Misadventures of Margaret*, in which she plays a Manhattan author drifting away from hubby Jeremy Northam, maintain her high work ethic, but are as yet unseen in the UK.

"I'm on 'The List' but I don't make money. There's some list and how much you're worth on it in box-office terms. Producers look at that because Hollywood movies are made

by producers, not directors. There are more fingers in the pie."

"People don't look at films anymore - in particular on her own play *Dumb in Love*, which she wrote five years ago - Posey is about to show the mainstream just how to drop the facade. Forthcoming is another Hal Hartley part, her largest yet for him. Real life, for Posey, real life consists of a split between living in her Manhattan apartment and jetting around the globe to be with her Irish actor boyfriend Stuart Townsend (they met when *The House of Yes* and *Resurrection Man* premiered on the same night at last year's London Film Festival).

More important, though perhaps disappointing, is her role as Tom Hanks's girlfriend in Nora Ephron's romantic comedy *You Got Mail*, which also features Meg Ryan. In this e-mail love story Posey's appearance is brief (it took only nine days to shoot) but will doubtless mark her long-awaited acceptance by Hollywood.

Dropped on the cutting room floor from *Sleepless in Seattle*, and beaten by Sandra Bullock and Renee Zellweger for roles in *Speed* and *Jerry Maguire*, the Indie Queen may yet reign in Tinseltown.

'The Daytrippers', from 24 July

JM

DOUBLE BILL

GREG MOTTOLA, DIRECTOR OF 'THE DAYTRIPPERS' TALKS ABOUT HIS IDEAL CINEMATIC PAIRING

IL BIDONE
(DIR: FEDERICO FELLINI, 1955)

CRIMES AND MISDEMEANOURS
(DIR: WOODY ALLEN, 1989)

FIRST, THERE is a film-maker connection - Woody Allen is a huge fan of Federico Fellini's. Secondly, both

movies focus on criminal behaviour from film makers who are not exactly known for making crime movies. Thirdly, both films are black comedies that touch on the theme of moral relativism and centre around characters who have committed a cardinal sin.

Il Bidone focuses on a group of conmen in post-war Rome who carry out a series of unscrupulous scams on people. One disturbing scene sees the gang posing as members of a local housing lottery board collecting money from the poor and homeless.

Another scene sees the gang dressed as priests using religion to relieve a devout Catholic farmer of his land.

In *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, Martin Landau plays a wealthy

doctor who is cheating on his wife with his lover Angelica Houston. When Landau decides to end the affair, Houston threatens to tell his wife. Landau is forced to kill Houston.

Instead of being ravaged by guilt, Landau comes to terms with his wrongdoing and moves on with his life.

Meanwhile, Allen, who plays a documentary film-maker in the film, is having his own battle with inner demons: should he continue to make documentary films for little profit, or sell out and become a fat-cat TV producer?

Allen opts to stick with the documentary film-making. But he soon discovers that his integrity brings him nothing but loneliness

and rejection. He is left wondering whether crime does, in fact, pay.

In *Il Bidone* the main character suffers for his sins. After seeing a young, crippled girl in desperate need of hospital care he decides to renounce his way of life - but it is too late.

Fellini observes that by reawakening your conscience, you lay yourself open to pain.

Both films take a harsh look at life through a comedy lens (which always wins points with me) and centre around compelling storylines that look at the struggle between faith and moral responsibility.

INTERVIEW BY
JENNIFER RODGER

THE THURSDAY REVIEW

OSCAR NOMINATION FOR BEST FOREIGN FILM 1998

"FALLS INTO THE TOP ECHELON OF NEW RUSSIAN CINEMA" - VARIETY

"A WONDERFUL DELICATE TALE" - THE GUARDIAN

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Believe everything you see on TV

The Truman Show, this summer's big movie hit in America, paints a disturbing portrait of life as a 24-hour docu-soap. By Jeff Dawson

AMID THE pastel gables of Seahaven, a small-town utopia right out of a Norman Rockwell painting, where the sun beams and the burghers smile, Truman Burbank pecks the cheek of his Stepford wife and heads for the office, just as he does every day.

Given Truman's contentment there would seem to be little wrong with this snapshot of backwater bliss. Only there is. It's all fake - the town is a giant studio set, his family and friends all hired actors, and poor old Truman a bumbling innocent whose every move since birth has been filmed secretly, fly-on-the-wall, and broadcast live and unedited, 24 hours a day, for the delectation of a global audience. "On the Air, Unaware," as the tag-line has it.

Welcome to *The Truman Show*, this summer's hit movie in the

If the Internet can give us live birth then LA news stations will give a live shotgun suicide'

States, and a safe bet to wait off with the silverware when Hollywood starts dishing it out in the New Year.

The metaphors in *The Truman Show* abound - from the omniscient TV director Christof (Ed Harris) who stomps about proclaiming himself Truman's "creator", to the predestinarian nature of Truman's existence (even the most trivial of encounters is totally orchestrated, right down to product placement).

All of which will be pored over in great detail with the film's UK release on 23 October, and is good reason why it is worthy of the accolades.

In fact, the film's director Peter Weir, the Australian romantic who gave us *Galipoli* and *Green Card*, should win a big gong straight off for the extraordinary feat of reining in his star - the gurning Jim Carrey - for the film's winning, tragi-comic performance.

True, the lab-rat set-up may not be entirely original - TV's *The Prison-*

er and *Westworld*, for example, touched on similar themes (indeed Paramount are currently the subject of a separate plagiarism lawsuit). But the difference here is that Truman - True Man - is not a willing participant. "I was getting sick of trying to explain it, so I posed a riddle," says Weir, approaching the film's premise somewhat more laterally. "How is it possible for man to be in prison and yet have no idea that he is? Answer: That he was born in prison."

But there is a bigger question. A zeitgeist thing. In terms of television entertainment, just how far away from reality is *The Truman Show*? "There's a generation of younger people who've been exposed from the cradle to a massive bombardment of images," explains Weir. "Commercials are now very powerful. They're selling lifestyles to the young, the concept of cool, so that round the world you find young kids who move and talk like these advertisements."

"The very fabric of reality has been disturbed in the Western world, and so that what's real and unreal is becoming increasingly confused. Films are beginning to reflect that. Life's a movie. Hey, nothing's real! Everything's for sale. These are strange times."

The medium, as the media guru Marshall McLuhan declared, is the message. It is indiscreet enough to bestow instant celebrity on, say, a woman whose chief attribute is an inability to drive; and powerful as a means of democratic acquiescence, as in the case of March's Iraqi show-down, when America's "window of opportunity" for military intervention was defined not by strategic initiatives, but by the ongoing Winter Olympics, which would have dented the 184 million American viewers who tuned in to watch "Gulf War 1" from enjoying the sequel.

If the Internet can give us a live birth, then eight LA news stations will give you a live shotgun suicide, interrupting early evening kiddies' programmes - as they did on 30 April - to show Daniel Jones, a 40-year-old HIV patient, pull out a 12-bore and despatch his brains skyward. Not that we should get carried



Jim Carrey gives a suitably restrained performance as the lab-rat character in *The Truman Show*

Melinda Gordon

away with American sensationalism, no matter how global the village.

"We are still a nation of curtain-twitchers and back-fence gossips," says Andrew Collins, the TV critic and scriptwriter of Channel 5's *Family Affairs*. "We would much rather something happening next door than in Hollywood."

Which would at least explain why British controversy amounts to whether three men taking a dump on *The Drop Dead Show* makes for appropriate viewing. And something far more in line with the notion that, despite its ability to showcase other arts, TV works best in its unique way by showing real life at its most familiar.

"It's a safer bet for broadcasters to put on a 13-week show about some people who work in hotel in Liverpool," adds Collins, citing the competition from satellite movies and the

video shop as to why terrestrial channels have turned their backs on scripted drama. "It's cheaper, easier to make, and likely to be more cost-effective."

"You'll get more viewers and they will watch it every week like a soap. They won't think, Oh, I've seen the first episode, I'm not watching that again."

The advent of the Camcorder effectively liberated the art of filmmaking from the elite, enabling just about anybody to send Jeremy Beadle a 10-second short about Auntie Beryl falling into a swimming pool/wedding cake. Certainly, there has been no shortage of budding programme-makers. And who needs to write the stuff?

According to Christine Geraghty, senior lecturer in media & communications at Goldsmith's College, real life has already begun to imitate art.

"The docu-soaps have a soap opera setting, where the locale is as important as the story," she says.

"Get the location right and you've got your characters. In soaps, the location and the characters are more important than the individual story lines, and I think that's why

'The advent of the Camcorder effectively liberated the art of film-making'

things like *Hotel* and *Driving School* have been so successful."

Thus recent pledges by the BBC that they will be limiting the production of similar fare in future, are irrelevant. The explosion of channels

with the advent of digital TV make it likely that there will be as many more programmes of this type as they are people willing to provide scenarios. If you can already be born, eat, drink, have sex, work, defecate and die for the television public, what is left but to plug those little gaps in between?

Indeed, on the Internet, websites have been cropping up, inviting people to peep into the private little worlds of their creators. The most well-known, JenniCAM, for example, (www.jennicam.org), has been up and running for two years, with the software designer Jennifer Ringley allowing people to glimpse life through a camera on the wall of her student digs in Pennsylvania.

All that is left is to turn the camera on someone who does not know they are being filmed.

Hence the popularity of the soap opera, the talk show, even popular

sitcoms such as *Seinfeld* and *Friends* (where you simply hang out in someone's apartment). And the proliferation of that voyeuristic phenomenon the docu-soap - *Driving School*, *The Cruise*, *The Tourist Trap*, *Clampers*, *Lakesiders* - which has put all human life into a fishbowl.

"It will happen," says Collins. "Andy Warhol's over-used quote says everyone can be famous for 15 minutes. Now it's likely that everybody will be famous for about 30 minutes every Tuesday for 13 weeks."

Weir throws a wry smile. "Friends have asked me what my movie's about, and I've replied that it's about a television show," he says. "What? Is this something already on?" he adds, affecting the voice of an inquiring friend.

"I tell them, no, it's a fiction..." *'The Truman Show'* is released in Britain in October

Boom-time for Europe's new Hollywood

Known mainly for banking, bureaucracy and boredom, Luxembourg is increasingly a magnet for glamorous names from the movie world. Pierre Reyland finds out why Peter Greenaway chose to shoot his last two films in Europe's smallest state

ON THE set of Peter Greenaway's new movie *Eight-and-a-Half Women*, the 56-year-old director sits comfortably amid the hussies and perfectly symmetrical interior of a reconstructed Swiss chateau. A group of stunningly beautiful Japanese women in starched white kimonos walk quietly past, returning to their dressing-rooms after another day's filming.

It's nearly the end of Greenaway's seven-week shoot in Luxembourg and, as the co-producer Jimmy de Brabant tells me, everything has gone smoothly.

"It's almost worrying," he says. "We haven't had the slightest problem - it's amazing. It's the first production where nothing serious has happened."

Perhaps this lack of problems is because the new Greenaway movie, like his last, *The Pillow Book*, has largely been shot in Luxembourg, a country where, according to de Brabant, "everything is a little easier than elsewhere".

Greenaway assures me that the

reason for coming to Luxembourg has more to do with easy money than with an easy mind. "You're a Luxembourg, and you know it's a very pragmatic, practical situation," he says. "So the fact that we're in Luxembourg is entirely to do with the tax incentives - I think it works out that 25 per cent of our budget is saved by working here."

To attract the likes of Greenaway and other famous directors, the Luxembourg government set up a lucrative tax incentive scheme 10 years ago. This allows foreign film producers to claim back as much as a quarter of the money they spend during production in the country, provided they team up with a local co-producer and shoot at least 40 per cent of the movie in Luxembourg.

"We're not only giving this tax advantage because we have so much money in our treasury," explains Guy Manderscheid, of the state's media department, "but because we want to build up an infrastructure and develop a film industry here in Luxembourg."

The scheme seems to have worked. Two years ago Anthony Waller came to Luxembourg to shoot the horror blockbuster *An American Werewolf in Paris*. Last year the British director Chris Roberts brought the Oscar-winning set designer Peter Lamont (of *Titanic* fame) to Luxembourg to shoot the \$30m science fiction epic *Wing Commander*.

And this year, Peter Greenaway is back.

Not surprisingly, Luxembourg's film industry is booming. "We only notice increases - not just in the number of applications from foreign producers, but also in the budgets involved. We now have six or seven multi-million-dollar productions in the pipeline," Manderscheid says. "Eighteen production companies have sprung up in the country over the last few years, and 400 people are permanently employed in the industry."

Paul Thilges, president of the Luxembourg Producers' Association, says that Luxembourgers have



Peter Greenaway

much to be excited about: "It's known in Europe and even overseas now that something is possible in Luxembourg, and we get more and more projects. All the producers here talk about it," he says.

But it isn't just the tax savings that make Luxembourg so attractive.

As de Brabant explains: "Having been here twice, Peter enjoys the calm part of Luxembourg. It's much more hectic shooting in larger cities, such as Paris and London. Here it's easy to get permission, and people don't ask for silly amounts of money to block the roads or gain access."

Despite its tiny size - Luxembourg has a population of only 400,000 - the country offers an attractive choice of natural film scenery. The postcard prettiness of the historic capital, Luxembourg Ville, for instance, with its smooth exteriors and expensively renovated old buildings, is a dream come true for many film directors.

"It has a distinctively European feel," says Thilges. "You can shoot any major European city here."

And Luxembourg's countryside, too, with its hilly lake district in the north and its green and pleasant valleys in the south, features regularly in many European and US films and TV programmes.

"It's a very attractive place. Few people know how beautiful it is," de

Brabant says. "You have the most wonderful locations. The new Greenaway movie is set near a lake in Geneva, Switzerland. So we found many areas in Luxembourg that match."

Luxembourg's film industry may be growing fast, but native technicians and crew members are still somewhat thin on the ground.

"They say that in Luxembourg there's only one of everything: there's no competition, total monopoly," says Greenaway. "We have a man here who looks after pigs. There's only one man in Luxembourg who looks after pigs - so we have to use him."

But a growing number of Luxembourgers, most of whom speak at least four languages, are keen to train in the film industry and take advantage of the job opportunities it provides. Insiders think that when it comes to gaining hands-on experience, Luxembourg is a perfect place to start.

"It's a small place, everybody knows everybody, so it's easy to get

your first job," says Romain Schroeder, of the Carousel Picture Company. "In countries such as England and France, it takes you 10 years to get up to a certain level. Here, if you're good at what you're doing, after a year you can reach a level where you earn a decent amount of money and have an exciting job."

Most people would not easily associate Luxembourg with the charisma and glamour of the international movie industry. Home to 230 banks and a number of European Union institutions, the EU's smallest and richest member state is often dismissed as a boring financial and bureaucratic centre, whose population meekly enjoys the material comforts resulting from minimal unemployment and living standards that are among the highest in the world.

But the birth of Luxembourg's film industry proves that, behind the facade of ordinariness, Luxembourg is enjoying an explosion of creativity that is giving the country some cosmopolitan appeal at last.

THE OMNIPRESENT Leonardo DiCaprio may finally have settled on his next film. Having been associated at various points with Spike Lee's *Son of Sam* project, the snappily entitled *Bombshell: The Secret Story of America's Unknown Atomic Spy Conspiracy*, and, notoriously, the big screen adaptation of *American Psycho*, the 23-year-old is to star in the film version of Alex Garland's cult novel *The Beach*, according to *Variety* magazine.

The Beach will be produced by the *Trainspotting* trio - Danny Boyle, Andrew Macdonald and Danny Hodge - who will doubtless be hoping to put the commercial failure of *A Life Less Ordinary* behind them with the world's biggest male star on board.

Garland's novel is on the age-old theme of paradise lost, updated for

the travelling generation, taking as its location the tourist trails of the Far East. DiCaprio will probably play the central character, Richard, whose adolescent obsessions - he is a video game addict and Vietnam movie buff - will suit the actor who made his name playing quirky teenagers in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* and *This Boy's Life*.

UNTIL WINONA Ryder finally gets the role she was born to play - a Muppet movie biopic of Joan of Arc - she will have to put up with the tedious sci-fi/fantasy fare that she seems to have got herself involved with lately. Ryder did not do much more than fret at Sigourney Weaver's side in *Alien: Resurrection* so let us hope she gets to mix it a bit more with her next

RUSHES

MIKE HIGGINS

supernatural foe: Satan (yes, really). In *Lost Souls*, she is to star as a reformed seminary teacher who has to convince a lawyer that a conspiracy with which he is involved is on the point of releasing Satan from hell. At least it will all look nice: the *Schindler's List* cinematographer Janusz Kaminski will make his directorial debut with the film.

ACCORDING TO *Variety*, Ralph Fiennes may be about to resume his lit-film pin-up status, if he successfully negotiates to star in a film version of Graham Greene's

The End of the Affair. Oscar and Lucinda failed to repeat the wild success of *The English Patient*, but the word is that Neil Jordan's adaptation will, ahem, be laying the sex on with a trowel.

On the surface, the story bears more than a passing resemblance to the ultra-successful *Patient*. It is set in London during the Blitz, when a married woman begins an affair with her husband's good friend, a writer. When the writer is injured during a bombing raid, his lover is so overcome by guilt that she prays to God to save him. In exchange for the Almighty's divine intervention, she ends the affair and returns to her husband. But, in typical love-story fashion, the two cannot stay apart.

Production is likely to begin in England early next year.



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THE GUARDIAN

OPENS JULY 24

Small enough to take on Godzilla

Blockbusters are getting longer and longer. So it was with some relief that Matthew Sweet arrived at the Vila do Conde short film festival

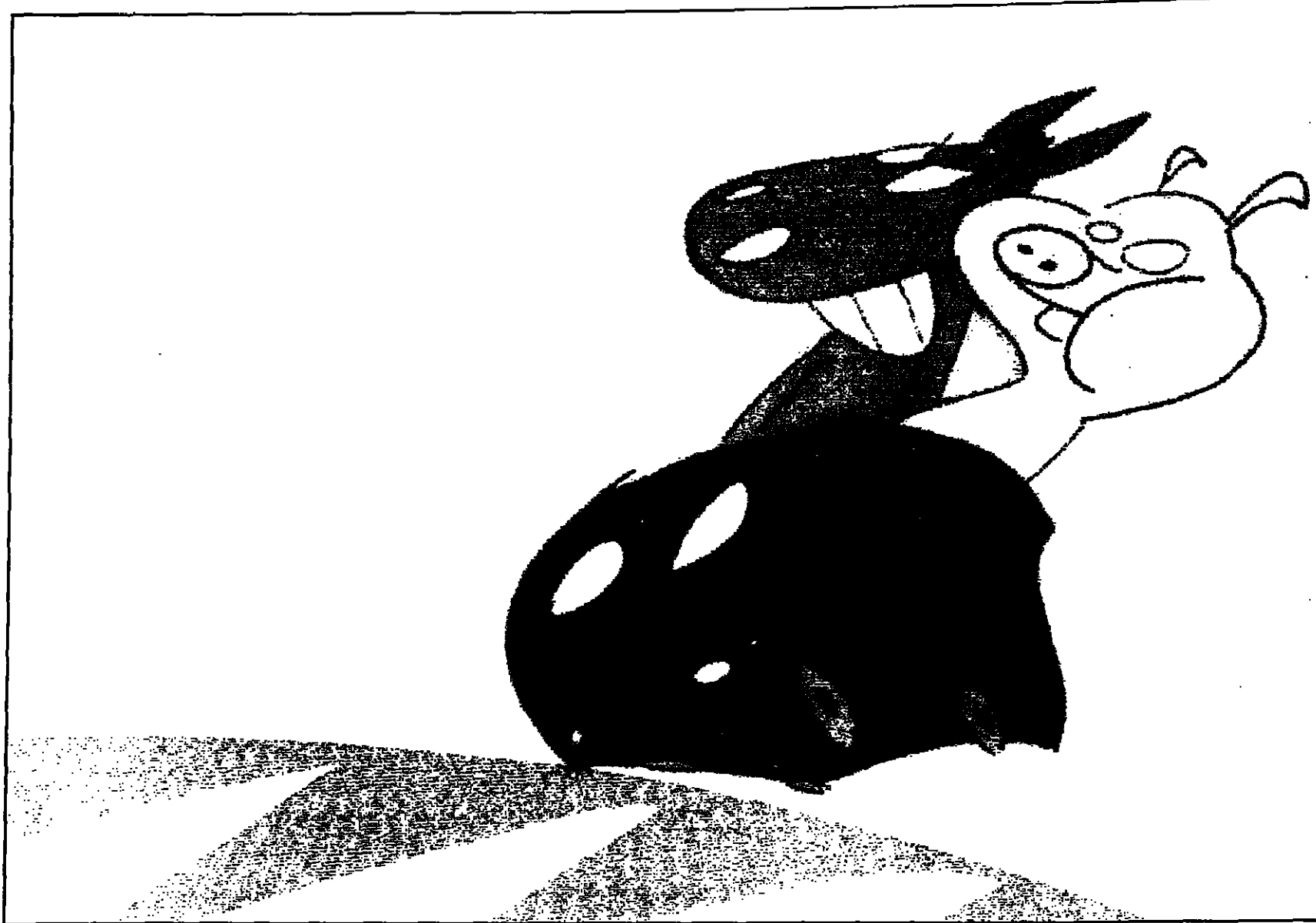
TO THE dismay of overworked film critics everywhere, Hollywood blockbusters are getting longer all the time. Roland Emmerich's remake of *Godzilla* has a running time of 138 minutes – which means that if you unspooled the movie from its reels, it would be about 13,400 feet longer than its gargantuan star. As the lizard's PR boys say, size does matter. *Titanic*, on the other hand, exceeds the length of its eponymous ship by a massive 16,631 feet – and its spectacular performance at the box office means that if James Cameron wanted to make a movie twice that long, nobody would have the nerve to say no to him.

Some less egomaniacal film-makers, however, still believe that short is beautiful. Last week, in a pretty seaside town outside the Portuguese city of Oporto, practitioners and fans of short movie-making gathered to celebrate the art of cinematic brevity. For the past six years, the Vila do Conde International Short Film Festival has dedicated itself to promoting one-, two- and three-reel films. It screens new shorts from all over the world, and compiles retrospectives of rare and classic works. During this time, it has grown from being an adjunct of a local student film club, to one of the most important festivals of its kind in the world. This year, over 1,100 films were submitted for the International Competition, 200 more than any previous year. So why, you may be wondering, do we never get to see them in this country?

In the days of silent cinema, every film was a short film. Fluffy entertainments, such as the Lumière Brothers' *Arrival of a Train at Ciotat Station*, needed only a few seconds to make their point. At the start of the 1900s, the length of the average movie was standardised to one 10-minute reel, and this remained the industry norm until the international success of lengthier European films such as *Queen Elizabeth* (1912) fuelled the trend towards full-length features. By 1918, the short had been demoted to warm-up duty for longer, grander movies. For a while it remained popular for comedy and news, but by the Fifties, the success of the double feature had all but driven the short subject from mainstream movie theatres in Europe and America.

Today, the places where a widespread culture of short-watching thrives are few and far between – as the directors and critics gathered at Vila do Conde are ready to concede. Karl Nussbaum is a founder member of Film Crash, a New York-based artistic collective that showcases new, short movies. "It's never a money-making venture," he explains. "Whenever Film Crash show programmes of short films, it's very time-consuming to prepare, and there's very little financial return."

The Slovenian film-maker Maja Weiss recalls how "you used to be able to see a short before every feature in cinemas all over the world. But there are no short films in the



'Pic Pic Andre Show' proves there is life in animation after Loony Tunes

commercial cinema any more. I've only ever seen two shorts programmed with a feature film, and they were both in Berlin."

Even in countries where cinemas are legally required to accompany their features with a short, distributors tend to ignore new and creative work. In India, home of the world's most prolific film industry, this is the case.

"The shorts they show are not very interesting," admits Uma da Cunha, an Indian cinema critic and casting director. "Most of them are government propaganda films. I don't blame people for not being interested in them."

However, despite this sorry story of popular decline, short film-making is far from being a dying art. Although only six short films enjoyed national release in the UK last year, they continue to be made at a great rate. 175 new British shorts were considered for selection at Vila do Conde, more than from any other country.

Asif Kapadia is director of *The Sheep Thief*, an exquisite British short that has picked up prizes at several European film festivals. "When I go to Europe I come back really enthusiastic about making short films," he says. "But after 10 minutes in London I'm really depressed because no one is really interested in them. It's ironic because I'm sure that British films are highly thought of in Europe. British films always do really well at European festivals." The BBC, Asif adds, have funded hundreds of short films in recent years, which languish unshown in their archives.

In the world's less affluent nations, however, short films enjoy support beyond

the festival audience. It may be one of the world's poorest countries, but Burkina Faso has a thriving short film industry. The capital city of Ouagadougou plays host each year to Fespaco, a huge market for shorts and features from Africa and the Arab world. This year, a special programme at Vila do Conde celebrated the work of short film-makers of the southern hemisphere, and their selection included films from Tunisia, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mozambique – countries that in Britain we gen-

'I make short films because it is possible to finance them yourself. I just take little bits of crap and try to turn them into something grand'

erally suppose are too poor to afford film production of any sort.

Some of the most surprising work on offer at the festival originated from those countries not best known for the productivity of their movie industries. The sole Azerbaijani entry, *All for the Best*, is an eccentric, engaging black comedy about a squad of soldiers charged with returning the dead bodies of casualties from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict back to their families. Shot in dusty monochrome, Vagif Mustafayev's satire on nationalism and military bureaucracy has many oddball jokes that I couldn't begin to understand.

But you do not need to be from Baku to enjoy its peculiar sense of fun, or the lead's unconvincing resemblance to Peter Sellers.

The prize-giving, however, was dominated by European efforts. First prize in the International Competition went to *My Country*, a blissfully funny 10 minutes from the Serbian director Milos Radovic – and possibly the only film in cinema history in which a director has been able to get a carthorse to look both shifty and evasive on cue. A Danish entry, *Pickup*, by Phil Mulloy, was given an honourable mention by the jury. "I make short films because it's possible to finance them yourself," he explains. "So when you've got unfashionable opinions, your voice isn't silenced by your dependence on other people for funding. I just take little bits of crap and try to turn them into something grand." He is modest about his achievements: "Not everyone likes my work. I've been at screenings where half the audience are booing and the other half are cheering. I generally go and sit with the half that are cheering."

It is this kind of response that keeps film-makers such as Mulloy producing films for the festival circuit, even when distributors remain largely uninterested in bringing them to the attention of a wider public. "We should stop worrying that short films aren't getting a wide release," argues Asif Kapadia. "There are plenty of shorts being screened at festivals, and maybe that's good enough. Maybe that's the proper home for them." And for the foreseeable future, Vila do Conde will be providing short cinema with one of its more attractive homes.

horse team who employ breakneck velocity and eye-watering inventiveness as they slam each other into doors and abuse each other with electrodes.

Mystifyingly, the winner of this section was Jan Pinkava's *Ger's Game*, an accomplished but rather charmless computer-generated sketch about an octogenarian chess player so determined to win that he even cheats when he plays against himself. A British entry, *The Chain*, a satire on war and greed by the animator Phil Mulloy, was given an honourable mention by the jury. "I make short films because it's possible to finance them yourself," he explains. "So when you've got unfashionable opinions, your voice isn't silenced by your dependence on other people for funding. I just take little bits of crap and try to turn them into something grand." He is modest about his achievements: "Not everyone likes my work. I've been at screenings where half the audience are booing and the other half are cheering. I generally go and sit with the half that are cheering."

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TEN GREAT SHORT FILMS



Arrival of a Train at Ciotat Station (Lumière Brothers, 1895)
On the bill at the first-ever public cinema screening on 28 December 1895 at the Grand Café on the Boulevard des Capucines, Paris. Its footage of a train pulling into the station was of such unprecedented reality that most of the audience ran screaming from the room.

A Trip to the Moon (Georges Méliès, 1902)
A witty adaptation of the Jules Verne novel. Its image of a lunar rocket plunging into the eye of the Man in the Moon is still one of cinema's most enduring images.

Un Chien Andalou (above) (Luis Buñuel, 1929)
The product of an exchange of dreams and fantasies with Salvador Dalí, Buñuel's masterpiece is a riot of eyeballs, razor blades, and human hands devoured by ants.

The Music Box (Hal Roach, 1932)
Two delivery men attempt to drag a piano up a huge flight of steps. Laurel and Hardy's exemplary exercise in comic timing.

Popeye the Sailor meets Sinbad the Sailor (Dave Fleischer, 1936)
Popeye and his crew alight on an island occupied by the fearsome Sinbad (uncannily similar to Bluto, of course) and his army of peculiar creatures.

The Night Mail (Basil Wright, Harry Watt, 1936)
Wright and Watt's rhythmic documentary narrates the progress of a letter from one end of the country to the other.

What's Opera, Doc? (Chuck Jones, 1957)
Director Chuck Jones, composer Richard Wagner and Bugs Bunny are a formidable combination in this hare-brained animation.

Why Man Creates (Saul Bass, 1968)
Saul Bass won an Oscar for this meditative documentary on the human creative process.

Dekalog (Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1989)
A series of short films using the Ten Commandments to investigate contemporary Poland.

Denko (Mohamed Camara, 1992)
Guinean director Camara transfers Oedipus to Africa.

THE CHARTS

THE LATEST asteroid-on-collision-course-for-the-earth drama, *Armageddon* (starring Bruce Willis, right) tops US Box Office takings, netting \$58m in its first seven days. Not for a bad week's work, but there have been mutterings across The Pond. For starters, that's 25 per cent down on *Men in Black's* takings last year: b, do we really need another space-debris-disaster flick so soon after *Deep Impact*? and c. it's a real turkey! You can judge for yourselves from 7 August.

US BOX OFFICE

TITLE	SCREENS	3-DAY TAKINGS
1 <i>Armageddon</i>	3127	\$36,083,272
2 <i>Dr Dolittle</i>	2871	\$19,675,551
3 <i>Mulan</i>	2953	\$11,476,524
4 <i>Out of Sight</i>	2112	\$6,578,475
5 <i>The X-Files</i>	2602	\$6,253,038
6 <i>The Truman Show</i>	2756	\$6,008,056
7 <i>Six Days, Seven Nights</i>	2479	\$5,805,699
8 <i>A Perfect Murder</i>	2076	\$3,335,890
9 <i>Hope Floats</i>	1248	\$1,603,563
10 <i>The Horse Whisperer</i>	1048	\$1,341,274

UK BOX OFFICE

TITLE	SCREENS	3-DAY TAKINGS
1 <i>Six Days, Seven Nights</i>	402	£706,928
2 <i>Grease</i>	243	£598,631
3 <i>The Wedding Singer</i>	286	£503,759
4 <i>City of Angels</i>	303	£340,121
5 <i>Sliding Doors</i>	222	£216,812
6 <i>Mad City</i>	151	£209,272
7 <i>Mimic</i>	205	£161,377
8 <i>The Object of My Affection</i>	196	£161,364
9 <i>Deep Impact</i>	130	£121,766
10 <i>Mousehunt</i>	191	£86,486

SPANISH BOX OFFICE

TITLE	SCREENS	3-DAY TAKINGS
1 <i>The Object of My Affection</i>	131	US\$636,192
2 <i>Quest for Camelot</i>	163	\$437,301
3 <i>Mr Magoo</i>	150	\$422,669
4 <i>Deep Impact</i>	162	\$340,091
5 <i>Twilight</i>	87	\$325,460
6 <i>The Gingerbread Man</i>	94	\$266,900
7 <i>The Big Lebowski</i>	77	\$171,440
8 <i>American Werewolf in Paris</i>	77	\$145,305
9 <i>The Proposition</i>	50	\$114,686
10 <i>Switchback</i>	74	\$106,777

LONDON BOX OFFICE

TITLE	SCREENS	WEEK'S TAKINGS
1 <i>Six Days, Seven Nights</i>	10	£52,379
2 <i>Love and Death in Long Island</i>	9	£40,448
3 <i>City of Angels</i>	10	£37,226
4 <i>Mad City</i>	5	£34,402
5 <i>Grease</i>	6	£31,878
6 <i>The Object of My Affection</i>	9	£25,758
7 <i>The Wedding Singer</i>	7	£25,129
8 <i>Sliding Doors</i>	4	£23,403
9 <i>The Big Lebowski</i>	5	£15,764
10 <i>Sling Blade</i>	5	£12,842

AUSTRALIAN BOX OFFICE

TITLE	SCREENS	WEEK'S TAKINGS
1 <i>Dr Dolittle</i>	234	US\$3,621,499
2 <i>Deep Impact</i>	247	\$1,532,481
3 <i>Six Days, Seven Nights</i>	134	\$951,295
4 <i>Godzilla</i>	224	\$831,216
5 <i>Grease</i>	133	\$707,464
6 <i>Anastasia</i>	187	\$623,532
7 <i>The Big Hit</i>	93	\$432,592
8 <i>The Horse Whisperer</i>	173	\$423,611
9 <i>The Little Mermaid</i>	165	\$336,208
10 <i>Kundun</i>	22	\$249,660



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The Insolvency Act 1986
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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 98 of the Insolvency Act 1986, that a meeting of the creditors of the above named company will be held at the Royal Scot Hotel, 100 George Street, London WC2B 5PP, on Tuesday 21st July 1998 at 10.30 am for the purpose of appointing a liquidator of the company and of ascertaining a liquidation committee. Resolutions to be taken at the meeting may include the appointment of a liquidator and the appointment of a committee of inspection. The meeting will be held in private and no person shall be admitted to it unless he has been authorised by the court or the liquidator to be present. The meeting will be held in private and no person shall be admitted to it unless he has been authorised by the court or the liquidator to be present. The meeting will be held in private and no person shall be admitted to it unless he has been authorised by the court or the liquidator to be present.

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THE THURSDAY REVIEW
The Independent 16 July 1998

Godzilla

TEN GREAT
SHORT FILMS

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FAST TRACK

GRADUATING TO THE WORLD OF WORK

The Derek Draper affair revealed young men in powerful positions. But how did they get there? By Linus Gregoriadis

Lobbying isn't a dirty word

THE NEGATIVE publicity engulfing the world of lobbying will do little to deter the growing numbers of students who are intent on joining the industry, and it is not difficult to see why.

If the vast quantity of newsprint devoted to Derek Draper and his connections with the Labour Party has shown anything, it is that "public affairs consultants" can earn a lucrative livelihood deep in the nation's power base. And far from this being a sinister profession full of Machiavellian figures who exploit their contacts, lobbyists argue that what they offer is a valuable and legitimate service.

Michael Burrell, managing director of Westminster Strategy, one of the country's leading lobbying firms, believes that the industry is a vital cog in the wheel of democracy. Like many in his vocation, he regards himself as a strategic adviser who can provide companies with political expertise: "Lobbying is absolutely part of a democratic process. In a free society, people have a right to make a case to the Government. We advise clients about how to make that case. In a free society, if you can pay for a lawyer and an accountant, it seems strange if you can't have professional guidance if you are threatened by something the Government is proposing."

"I'm very proud of the role people in my company and others play in trying to bridge the gap between business and Government. To many people, Westminster and Government are a secret maze. Lobbying is a genuine service to people which offers a guide through that maze. There is nothing remotely improper about that."

For those with aspirations of joining this profession, it is worth chronicling the rise of Derek Draper, the lobbyist who has found himself at the centre of a political storm over the last few weeks. Draper became involved in Labour politics at Manchester University and went on to land a job as a constituency assistant to Nick Brown, the Labour MP who is now the party's Chief Whip.

He then worked as a researcher for Peter Mandelson (now the Minister without Portfolio) before setting up a Labour Party magazine called *Progress*. After helping to write *The Blair Revolution*, he got a lobbying job with a company called Prima.

Though Draper is certainly not the average public affairs consultant, his route into the industry illustrates the importance of contacts and political know-how.

Mr Burrell explains the kind of experience his company is looking for: "It could be someone who has worked as a research assistant for an MP or at a political party's headquarters. It could also be someone with experience in the Civil Service or as a political journalist." Although applicants with experience in other professions are in the strongest position for a lobbying job, there are also opportunities for people fresh out of university, who can expect to start on a salary of between £12-16,000.



Michael Burrell's aim is to bridge the gap between business and Government

Nicola Kurtz

Westminster Strategy is one of a number of lobbying firms that take on a limited number of graduates every year.

Mr Burrell says: "The people we are looking for have selected a political course and are interested in politics. They will approach lobbying consultancies and then ask whether they can do work experience during their vacations. We regularly take on people on that basis."

"Work experience gives them a feel for whether they want to do this as a career. But it works both ways. It gives the consultancy a feel for whether they have an aptitude for it, and if there is a chance of taking them on."

Peter Dingle, of the Communication Group, says that a job with a

public affairs consultancy offers an excellent opportunity to young people who want to pursue their interest in politics within a rewarding vocation. "It's a good follow-on from a degree in politics or public affairs to seeing how politics really works. It puts the theory into practice."

Mr Dingle, the company's managing director of public affairs, is keen to stress the unglamorous nature of the job for someone who is a recent recruit to the industry. "At a fairly young age, people will do very much the bread-and-butter work. Having done two or three years, they will move job and come into it at a higher level elsewhere."

"When a person comes along, you have to explain that a lot of the work

is basic research and analysis. It is important to play it down. Doing basic research every single morning is hard work, and that is why it is important for the person to be interested in politics."

He adds: "It doesn't pay an awful lot of money but it is an opportunity. I'm sure the pay is in line with other jobs."

Quentin Browell, a director in the public affairs practice at Burson Marsteller, adds: "We look for those who show that they have got the necessary research skills. We also want people who can master a brief quickly. They have to be reasonably articulate, and it is also important that they have an interest in public affairs and a good understanding of how they work."

HOW MICHAEL BURRELL BECAME A LOBBYIST

MICHAEL BURRELL, managing director of Westminster Strategy, started as a journalist.

At grammar school, he won a place at Oxford University to study Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE). After completing a journalism course in Darlington, he became the funeral correspondent on the *Durham Advertiser*. He says he is indebted to his experience as a reporter, as it taught him shorthand and the importance of paying attention to detail.

He later moved to the *Brighton Evening Argus* where he became local government correspondent. At the age of 23, he became a lobby correspondent for Westminster Press, providing the group's regional papers - including the *Evening Argus* - with political stories from Westminster.

Over the next 10 years, he worked at Westminster, gaining invaluable insight into the workings of Parliament before he was made redundant in 1983.

Mr Burrell, now 38, says: "I couldn't find another job in journalism but I started applying for jobs in PR consultancies."

He found a job with a public relations firm where he created an arm of the company which specialised in lobbying. Three years later, in 1986, he set up Westminster Strategy. The company now employs 28 people and counts Amnesty International, the British Council, the Premier League and Nissan among its clients.

A-Z OF EMPLOYERS

HAYMARKET

is an ensuing emphasis on target-driven teamwork and commitment.

Vital statistics: There are around 1,000 employees in a number of different groups: business publications, magazines and exhibitions sectors. Last year's turnover was £100m.

Lifestyle: Trainees on the company's graduate programme are asked to work on various titles during their first two years. The firm encourages its bright young things to get chunky, with staff briefed to organise "informal clubs".

Easy to get into? For those with their eyes set on a career in media sales, yes. Last year, 50 graduates were recruited into this department, but would-be journalists will be disappointed: the company likes editorial recruits to have served their time on a local paper or have some other journalistic experience. For those who are recruited, personality and



Michael Heseltine

potential are more important than a good degree, although a spokeswoman says Haymarket tends to take more graduates from social sciences and arts disciplines than from the sciences. It is after trainees who can demonstrate "highly developed communication skills" and who possess "humour, tenacity, mental agility and all-round resilience". Those who apply can expect a preliminary telephone interview.

Glittering alumni: Naturally, he of the golden locks (Hezza) and, back in the early days, adland's Maurice Saatchi.

Pay: There is a basic graduate salary of £11,500, with commission potential of up to £430 per month. During the first 18 months of employment, graduates are given four salary reviews, and there is a chance to earn increased commission.

Training: A career development programme is run centrally and locally - through line managers - with an additional development programme for those who follow the management route.

Facilities: There is no canteen. Employees are turfed out to enjoy the delights of "local hostilities", according to its spokeswoman.

Who is the boss? Chairman is Lindsay Masters, a friend of Heseltine and around since the early days. Hezza himself, very much hands-on at Haymarket until he joined Edward Heath's Cabinet in 1970, bought back more shares last year and is the majority shareholder; he is also a non-executive director.

BULLETIN BOARD

THERE is a crisis in UK management, claims the Institute for Employment Studies. The problem is not lack of potential, but how managers are taught and what and how they learn.

Penny Tamkin, a research fellow at the institute and one of the authors of the report *Learning to Manage*, says: "Organisations spend considerable sums of money training and developing their managers, but still suffer autocratic bullies whose moment in history has gone. Worse than this are the far greater numbers of managers who have the potential to be really good but do not seem quite to realise what to do, or who cannot find the time or motivation to do it differently."

"These are the managers who do not communicate fully, who lack the confidence, the ability or the empathy to coach people to better performance, who spend too much time expertly 'doing' and too little in the front line of expert managing."

MANCHESTER BUSINESS School has teamed up with the Chartered Institute of Marketing to offer marketing and sales managers the opportunity to gain a premier

qualification in just five weekends.

The business school claims that the intensive course is the ideal means for busy professionals to gain the institute's internationally recognised postgraduate diploma. The course, aimed at managers with six years' marketing/sales experience, has programmes starting in September and January.

EMPLOYERS WILL have to consult staff and their representatives to agree whether time spent on work-related activities such as social functions and travelling to meetings comes under working hours, as part of proposed legislation to implement the European Working Time Directive. Antonia McAlindin, a barrister, told the Institute of Personnel and Development and JSB Training Employment Law and Practice conference last week that the directive still leaves much to be agreed.

A KEY role in the increasing competitiveness of British industry is being attributed to business schools. The Association of Business Schools says in its report, *Pillars of the Economy - Developing*

World Class Management Performance, which is to be published on Monday, that the dramatic rise in UK management's performance is one of the most important factors in this rise. The report cites the fact that organisations are increasing the amount of training given to managers and that the objectives of such initiatives are far better defined than they were.

DO YOU want to increase your motivation, jump-start your career, stretch your mind, take control of your life or just rediscover the joy of learning? Of course you do. Then *Quantum Learning for Business* (Piatkus, £12.99) could be just the book you need. Drawing on the earlier *Quantum Learning*, by Bobbi DePorter with Mike Her-nacki, the book is another addition to the constantly growing pile of self-help texts and, as such, makes use of plenty of neuroscience, psychology and graphics in an effort to teach the reader to be "more confident, effective and successful at work".

ROGER TRAPP

Andrew Needham and Jan Levy started a multi-million-pound business at college. Who said students are lazy? By Tom Morgan

Nice work (if you can create it)

AFTER COLLEGE life, the idea that you have got to work for the next 45 years is pretty demoralising. There are consolations but, for a few maverick high-achievers, dragging themselves out of bed at some unearthly hour of the morning to work for someone else is not an option.

In 1989, Andrew Needham, now 31, Jan Levy, now 28, and a few friends at university in Edinburgh started Student Pages, a services directory with money-off vouchers for students. Needham says: "A friend came across the idea in the States and we thought it had great potential - much more fun than stacking shelves. At the start there was no grand plan - we were just optimists who hoped we could make a little money."

Student Pages now extends to 26 city editions and has expanded to become a student-specific marketing company. Student Marketing, which turned over £1.8m in 1997/98, Hobsons Publishing, a subsidiary of the Daily Mail group, bought the company in September last year. Needham has remained as group managing director.

Graduation is crunch time for any student. For many it is the first time their lives are completely in their own hands and they have to decide between relying on their own, relatively unproven abilities and taking

a safer, more traditional route with an established employer. Needham recalls: "I did make a conscious choice when I graduated. Lots of people were going for their second or third interview with Goldman Sachs or whoever, but I hadn't even applied for any jobs. When I told people about Student Pages they would just switch off - there was quite a lot of pressure not to do it."

In fact, Needham considers that it was this negativity, coupled with his inexperience, which spurred him and Levy on. "I wanted to prove to those people that I could make a success of it. There is also the advantage that you do know nothing - there aren't any grey areas because you haven't considered them."

Anyone can spot the entrepreneur on their campus. He or she is the bright spark with 50 ex-Royal Mail bikes, bought for £200 but on sale for a tenner apiece. Or the one promoting the club night in town. Or reading up on real estate in Kazakhstan.

Dr Peter Hawkins, a specialist at Liverpool's Graduate Into Employment unit, says: "The entrepreneur would set up a stall or a scam of one sort or another, whereas the traditionalist would get a job in a bar."

He believes that the type of student likely to establish a business thinks in a completely different way.



Andrew Needham and Jan Levy started their business when they were students in Edinburgh

Neville Elder

Their self-awareness and confidence means that they know exactly what they want, what they are good at and what opportunities they can take advantage of.

Dr Hawkins says: "These individuals are extremely self-reliant. The key factor is that they do not just wait for opportunities to come along - they're very good at creating opportunities and learning experiences."

There is an argument that you could learn these skills - that a latent entrepreneur lurks in us all. But

without the necessary attitude or influences this instinct remains largely undeveloped. "Most 20-year-olds are still pretty raw," says Dr Hawkins. He sees the need to develop an increasing number of "safe" learning opportunities, in universities or as part of work experience placements, where initiative skills can be nurtured.

Mike Bell is one of the founding partners of Geomica, a software development and consultancy business. He wanted to set up his own company but lacked the confidence

to do it straight after his degree, staying on instead to do a PhD in computer science. He says: "I think the extra age and experience were a definite help."

For a company that now boasts clients such as Scottish Courage, BICC Cables and several major universities, Geomica had an ignominious start. Bell and fellow PhD student Geoff Kendall worked on their first job at night in a bedroom. "To start with we had one PC between the two of us."

When they reached the end of

their studies they decided to continue with their embryonic business. Bell says: "All the graduate jobs just didn't appeal. A lot of my friends seemed to be in jobs where you're only part of a huge system. You end up thinking things could be done better, and getting frustrated."

Bell and his colleagues had to learn business skills from scratch, phoning up people for tips and using books. "Small business guides taught us about VAT and so on. Most of the rest, in my opinion, has all been common sense... experience

HOW TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR

Peter Hawkins of Liverpool's Graduate Into Employment unit suggests that you:

- Use every opportunity you have to create something out of nothing.
- Constantly challenge yourself - no one ever made their first million sitting around watching Countdown.
- Promote yourself by volunteering for high-profile positions within the Student Union.
- Find two people who have set up their own businesses to act as mentors.
- Get a demanding part-time job in a recently founded small business.
- Be the right kind of person - energetic, determined, resilient and focused.
- Hang around with the right sort of people - those who are positive, risk-taking, vision-builders.
- Identify a new market.
- Have bags of self-belief.
- Network - remember your flatmate's auntie who said she'd be happy to give you advice at any time?
- Be prepared to travel round all the support groups and agencies, such as the Prince's Youth Business Trust and the Training and Enterprise Council.
- See your friendly bank manager - grants, loans and advice are all available.

Your public sector needs you

Careers in the public service don't have to involve entering the Kafkaesque world of Whitehall. By Paul Gosling

AROUND TWO-thirds of civil servants are now employed not by the big departments of state, but by smaller, semi-autonomous executive agencies. These agencies recruit staff themselves, determining the skills they need, and have a level of flexibility over the working conditions of employees.

This is in stark contrast to the old-style Civil Service, under which applicants for even junior positions had to be interviewed by central recruitment boards, with a successful applicant allocated to the department the board considered most appropriate. In those days, it was extremely difficult subsequently to transfer from one government department to another.

Now civil servants receive regular vacancy bulletins, and staff can apply for promotion to another department or executive agency.

There is little centralised control today over how individual departments and agencies within the Civil Service operate. The Cabinet Office does not record how many of the 138 executive agencies are responsible for their own staff recruitment, adding that this is determined by the contractual relationship between an agency and its sponsoring department. In a small survey of a

cross-section of executive agencies, *The Independent* found that they all conducted their own recruitment.

Even inside some agencies there is a large level of devolved decision making. The Benefits Agency employs more than 70,000 staff and is easily the largest executive agency. Most of its staff recruitment decisions are taken by local managers. The type of staff needed and the qualifications required are determined at local office level. Most vacancies are for low-skilled clerical jobs and few recruits are graduates.

Its sister organisation, the Contributions Agency, oversees the collection of national insurance payments, and employs 8,000 staff, most of whom are clerical staff based in its central office in Newcastle. There are, though, opportunities for graduates as managers and inspectors in its offices.

Other agencies, while mostly recruiting non-graduates for general clerical jobs, also take on a minority of graduates. The Public Records Office (PRO), which has 450 staff, recruits about 50 new employees a

year, of which about a dozen will be graduates. Anne Crawford, the PRO's spokeswoman, says: "We employ a wide range of staff, ranging from highly qualified academics to the people who take documents off the shelf. We also recruit graduates for specialist roles such as

Most vacancies are for low-skilled clerical jobs and few recruits are graduates.

finance and personnel. For our reader service advice we look for history graduates, particularly for people with doctorates, who studied public records and used public records for their doctorates. There is a career structure within the office, and people can go on to director level if they are good enough."

The Defence Establishment Re-

search Agency (Dera) is another of the large executive agencies, with about 12,000 staff, with one of the highest proportions of graduates. It recruits about 1,000 new staff a year, including 300 to 400 new or nearly new science graduates who will form the basis of its research and development workforce of the future. Traditionally Dera has developed weapons for the Ministry of Defence, but more of its focus now is on transferring military technology to civilian uses, and winning customers from the private sector.

Tony Burke, Dera's personnel manager, says: "As well as our graduate entrants we take on some chartered engineers and scientists in mid-career for project management roles. Our structure is a pyramid, and organisations are becoming flatter, so we are trying to reward personal worth to the business, and people can progress quite reasonably in the same job. There are career development programmes in place for staff."

Other specialist agencies, though, stress that job opportunities are few

and far between. The Ordnance Survey has 1,850 staff, but has a full complement of cartographers and surveyors, and will recruit only small numbers of extra employees for one-off exercises. It does occasionally take on new staff for IT, marketing and personnel jobs.

An alternative for a few is the fast-stream programme for graduates, run by the Cabinet Office on behalf of all government departments, but this does not feed into the executive agencies. In the latest documented programme almost 20,000 top graduates applied for fewer than 500 positions. These were spread across seven disciplines: administration, inland revenue, law, economics, statistics, science and engineering, and government communications. Successful applicants will become the future permanent secretaries and other senior mandarins.

The uncomfortable truth, though, is that overall the Civil Service is still going through a long-term restructuring programme that has reduced the number of staff, and has damaged the prospects of graduates to obtain good jobs or achieve promotion once they are employed. The right job is likely to be a fulfilling one, but there are fewer of them around these days.

'My boss keeps bullying me'

HELP DESK

YOUR CAREER PROBLEMS SOLVED BY THE EXPERTS

The problem:

My boss has a reputation for being tough and demanding. He has a go at everyone but recently focused on me. I have been humiliated by him several times in public and each occasion is worse than the last. As a man in a macho industry, I know everyone thinks that I ought to be able to cope, and so do I. I cannot talk to anyone about this and do my best to avoid my boss. The paradox is that on one occasion when I shouted back, he seemed, if anything, happier. Should I tell him he is making my life miserable, and ask him to be more sensitive?

NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD

The solution:

This is a common problem and it is not always men to men; there are a lot of female bullies too. It is important that you keep a diary of the incidents and get people in the office to back you up, then go to personnel.

This can also be achieved with a memo, but choose your words carefully. eg "I feel that the working atmosphere is unacceptable", and ensure that you make it clear what he is respected for.

When it comes to approaching your boss, take him aside and tell him that it seems you are not getting on, and that you should go for a drink to discuss any problems.

On the other hand, if you are comfortable with shouting back then that is the way to deal with it. Do it a few times and it may stop altogether.

Virginia Ironside

indicates insecurity on behalf of the perpetrator. I would recommend talking things through in confidence with a counsellor to identify the best way forward for you.

Lynn Macwhinnie, chair of the British Association of Counselling at Work, Eastlands Court, St Peter's Road, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 3QP (01788 335617)

The experience is isolating and undermines confidence, but you can take action. Confronting a bully may lead to worse victimisation but if you are prepared to take that risk, focus on the behaviour rather than the person, saying that you find it unacceptable.

If you decide against confrontation, approach your personnel department or union and make an informal complaint. If you do not get satisfaction, consider taking out a formal complaint, which your company must investigate.

Judith Jackson, the Andrea Adams Trust. For further information send an A4 size to: The Andrea Adams Trust, 24, Derek Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 4PF

COMPILED BY SARAH BARRELL

If you have a work problem, and want expert advice, write to Carmen Fielding, Fast Track, Features, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL; fax 0171-236 2182; or e-mail c.fielding@independent.co.uk

How to take on men at football and win

CV

RACHEL ANDERSON, BRITAIN'S ONLY LICENSED FEMALE FOOTBALL AGENT

RACHEL ANDERSON, 41, became Britain's only licensed female football agent seven years ago when West Ham's Julian Dicks asked her to represent him. Now she has 27 players on her books. Earlier this year, the Players' Football Association caused a scandal when they refused her entry to their annual bash. Last month she took the matter to the House of Lords, calling for a change in the law on sexual discrimination.

Becoming a football agent was total chance. I had been working as a property dealer and was doing a physiotherapy course after serious car accident. I had twisted my spine and was told I only had a 50-50 chance of walking again. I spent three months in hospital unable to move but was determined to fight back to full mobility, which I did.

Julian Dicks's wife, Kay, was doing the same course, but I had no idea who she was. One day, I picked up a tabloid and they had a picture of Julian holding what looked like a weapon - but was in fact a corner flag they had blacked out. There was

a big headline saying, "Terminator goes over the top again". I have always loved West Ham and thought Julian was the best defender I had seen. But I commented on what he had done and said to Kay, "This boy should not talk to the press."

By the next week, I had realised who Julian's wife was, and I apologised to her. But she said I was right and she started passing on what I said to Julian. By the end of the course, he got sick of hearing about what I thought and said, "You do it if you're so clever." And I just said, "Yeah, all right. How difficult can it be to be a football agent?"

Julian and I agreed to give each other a year. But within that time I moved him to Liverpool and back again, which I now know was a major thing to have done. At West

Ham, he was the key to gaining interest from other players and he snowballed from there. I think they saw how his image changed after working with me.

His friend Don Hutchinson asked if I could take him on, because he had done some silly things. He had been photographed at a party fooling around with a bottle of Budweiser hiding his privates. I said to him, "If it had been Sol, I would have been ashamed, but Budweiser is a much longer word."

I come from Westcliff-on-Sea, near Southend in Essex, and we've always been an unusual family.

My grandfather, Landal Charlton, was a founder of Mirror Group Newspapers. And my dad, Warwick Charlton, was aide to Lord Mountbatten. During the Second World War



Rachel Anderson

he started 11 newspapers, and used to steal newspaper from behind enemy lines.

After school, I got involved with the family business, Gateways, which handled merchandising for feature films. We had rights for all the firms except Disney but we got fed up with being told we had done things like making Bugs Bunny's ears too small. That was sold on, and

in my late teens I became the assistant to Sir Stanley Rous, the former Fifa president. I helped him run a sporting valour scheme, which was wonderful. I suppose it was Sir Stanley who made me feel it was all right to like football.

I got married when I was 18 and had the first of my two children when I was 21. After that I worked from home doing freelance press releases. I also helped my family when they became involved with bringing the Bolshoi Ballet and Moscow State Circus to Britain. My husband and I entered the roller-coaster world of property in the Eighties. John is a chartered surveyor, and luckily we were able to ride it out when things went wrong.

I hope that other women will become football agents. I have not come across too much sexism from managers. The nicest thing one of them said was that if I was not careful, I would end up giving agents a good name.

INTERVIEW BY MARK OLIVER



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the ability to work in a team are essential. Two to five years' IT analysis or development
experience gained within a blue chip organisation is preferred, but there are openings for
exceptional individuals with a numerate degree who are interested in IT as a new career.

The evening will be informative but informal. You will hear about Barclays Capital, the
careers we offer in technology and other specific opportunities, direct from our team in
Canary Wharf. There will be a pre-selection procedure to find the very best candidates, as
attendance will be limited to a total of 30 people at each seminar.

If this sounds inviting to you, please forward your CV and a letter of introduction to:
Celine McKenna, The Wireax Partnership, 150 Regent Street, London W1R 5FA.
Telephone: 0171 432 0341. Fax: 0171 432 0349. Email: celine.mckenna@wireax.com



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GRADUATE, GENERAL, PUBLIC



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South East to £40,000 + Car
This major Consultancy requires Visual Basic Consultants for client-facing development work. This is an exciting opportunity for candidates with strong VB4/5 and SQL Server experience, coupled with solid interpersonal skills to succeed in a varied working environment. JR223

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London/S.E. to £38,000 + Bens
We have a number of excellent opportunities for NT professionals in the South. Skills required include NT Server/Workstation, MS Exchange, SMS and MS Office. The work is varied and excellent career prospects exist for the right candidates. JR224

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Berkshire to £45,000 + Car Allow + Bonus
Expanding Business Intelligence Consultancy specialising in Data Warehouse, DSS and Data Mining/Mart tools, seek a number of Consultants with experience in any of the above. Continuous ongoing training will be provided for candidates keen to expand their skills. SR225

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Surrey to £30,000
Working in a large multi-national organisation, the role is to provide Intranet application development, and will involve user analysis and consultancy. Experience in a range of Internet and Intranet technologies are required, including Java/JavaScript and HTML. SR226

CLIPPER A/Ps - Train in Visual Basic

Middlesex to £25,000
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INFORMIX PROGRAMMERS

South East £20,000 to £35,000
Permanent and contract opportunities all over London and the South East for Informix Developers to join a range of organisations in the location of your choice! Good prospects for cross-training to Visual technologies and to other databases are also available. SPJ228

POWERBUILDER DEVELOPERS

London to £40,000
If you have one year's upwards Powerbuilder experience, then this company would like to hear from you! This project is to develop web browser-based applications, and full training in the latest Powerbuilder toolset as well as in database skills will be provided. SPJ229

GRADUATE TRAINEE DEVELOPERS

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Based in Sittingbourne you need to be up to date with all the accounting standards and their application, have a working knowledge of cash and treasury management, be fully computer literate ideally on SunAccount and able to manage our finance team effectively.

Please telephone Sally Wheeler on 01795 431134 for a job pack. Closing date for applications is 22 July. Interviews will be held during the week starting 6 August.

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THE INDEPENDENT

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CINEMA
WEST END

ABC BAKER STREET
(0171-835 9772) Baker Street
Godzilla 8.15pm Mad City 1.15pm,
3.40pm, 6.05pm, 8.30pm Sliding Doors
1.20pm, 3.40pm The Wedding Singer
6pm

ABC PANTON STREET
(0171-930 0631) Piccadilly Circus As
Good As It Gets 2pm, 5pm, 8pm The
Big Lebowski 1.15pm, 3.40pm, 6.05pm,
8.30pm Good Will Hunting 2.10pm,
5.15pm L.A. Confidential 8pm
Washington Square 2.40pm, 5.40pm,
8.25pm

ABC PICCADILLY
(0171-437 3561) Piccadilly Circus
Gore In Seven 1.15pm, 3.35pm,
5.55pm, 8.25pm Mrs Brown 1.20pm,
3.40pm, 6pm, 8.30pm

ABC SHAFTSBURY AVENUE
(0171-835 6279) Leicester
Square/Tottenham Court Road Kiss Or Kill
1.30pm, 3.55pm, 6.20pm, 8.45pm Live
Flesh 1.10pm, 3.35pm, 6pm, 8.25pm

ABC SWISS CENTRE
(0171-439 4470) Leicester Square
Deconstructing Harry 1.10pm, 3.30pm,
6.10pm, 8.40pm Kundun 1.10pm,
3.45pm, 6.10pm Martha - Meet Frank,
Daniel & Laurence 3.10pm, 7.10pm,
9.10pm My Son The Fanatic 1.10pm,
5.10pm Shall We Dance? 1.10pm,
3.35pm, 6pm, 8.40pm Sift Upper Lips
6.20pm

ABC TOTENHAM COURT ROAD
(0171-636 5148) Tottenham Court
Road City Of Angels 1.15pm, 3.55pm,
6.35pm, 9.15pm Godzilla 9.10pm The
Object Of My Affection 1.25pm, 4pm,
6.35pm The Wedding Singer 1.50pm,
4.20pm, 6.50pm, 8.25pm

BARBICAN SCREEN
(0171-382 7001) Moorgate/Barbican
Love And Death On Long Island 6.15pm,
8.40pm Six Days, Seven
Nights 6.15pm, 8.40pm

CHELSEA CINEMA
(0171-351 3747) Chelsea Square
Love And Death On Long Island
2.35pm, 4.40pm, 6.50pm, 9pm

CLAPHAM PICTURE HOUSE
(0171-498 2242) Clapham Common
Girls' Night 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 7pm,
9.15pm Grease (20th
Anniversary Edition) 1.30pm, 4pm,
6.15pm Love And Death On Long Island
5.15pm, 7.15pm Sliding Blade 2pm,
6.30pm, 9.15pm

CURZON MAYFAIR
(0171-369 1720) Green Park
Titanic 2.30pm, 7.30pm

ELEPHANT & CASTLE CORONET
(0171-703 4968) Elephant & Castle
Deep Impact 3.15pm, 5.45pm, 8.20pm
Godzilla 5.45pm, 8.20pm The Object
Of My Affection 3.40pm, 5.55pm,
8.30pm Six Days, Seven Nights
3.30pm

EMPIRE LEICESTER SQUARE
(0171-437 1234) Leicester Square
The Apostle 3pm Godzilla 5.30pm,
8.40pm Sliding Doors 1pm, 3.30pm,
6.40pm, 9pm

GATE NOTTING HILL
(0171-727 4043) Notting Hill Gate
Love And Death On Long Island
4.15pm, 6.35pm, 8.55pm

HAMMERSMITH VIRGIN
(0171-907 0718) Ravenscourt
Park/Hammersmith Road Kiss Or Kill
1.30pm, 3.55pm, 6.20pm, 8.45pm
Grease (20th Anniversary Edition)
2.30pm, 5.20pm, 8.10pm Mad City 1pm,
3.40pm, 6.15pm, 9pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1pm, 3.20pm, 6pm,
8.30pm The Wedding Singer 2pm

METRO
(0171-437 0757) Piccadilly
Circus/Leicester Square Love And Death
On Long Island 1.30pm, 3.55pm, 6.20pm,
8.45pm Panetta 3pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm

CURZON MINEMA
(0171-369 1723) Knightsbridge Live
Flesh 3pm, 5pm, 7pm, 9pm

NOTTING HILL CORONET
(0171-727 6705) Notting Hill Gate
Godzilla 6.30pm, 8.30pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 3pm

ODEON CAMDEN TOWN
(0181-315 4229) Camden Town City
Of Angels 1.15pm, 3.40pm, 6.05pm,
8.30pm Kiss Or Kill 1.20pm, 2.30pm,
4.45pm, 7pm, 9.15pm The Object Of
My Affection 3.20pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1.25pm, 3.30pm,
6.05pm, 8.45pm Sliding Blade 1.45pm,
5.15pm, 8.30pm The Wedding Singer
12.05pm, 2.20pm, 4.35pm, 6.50pm,
9.15pm

ODEON HAYMARKET
(0181-315 4212) Piccadilly Circus
The Wedding Singer 1.30pm, 3.55pm,
6.25pm, 8.45pm

ODEON KENSINGTON
(0181-315 4214) High Street
Kensington City Of Angels 7.40pm
Godzilla 6.15pm, 9.20pm The Object
Of My Affection 6.45pm, 9.30pm Six
Days, Seven Nights 7pm, 9.35pm

ODEON MARBLE ARCH
(0181-315 4216) Marble Arch City
Of Angels 1.15pm, 3.40pm, 6.05pm,
8.30pm Kiss Or Kill 1.20pm, 2.30pm,
4.45pm, 7pm, 9.15pm The Object Of
My Affection 3.20pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1.25pm, 3.30pm,
6.05pm, 8.45pm Sliding Blade 1.45pm,
5.15pm, 8.30pm The Wedding Singer
12.05pm, 2.20pm, 4.35pm, 6.50pm,
9.15pm

ODEON MEZZANINE
(0181-315 4215) Leicester Square As
Good As It Gets 3.45pm, 6.25pm,
9.05pm L.A. Confidential - Meet
Frank, Daniel & Laurence 6.40pm,
9.05pm Point Blank 6.30pm, 8.55pm

ODEON SWISS COTTAGE
(0181-315 4220) Swiss Cottage The
Big Lebowski 12.45pm, 3.25pm,
6.05pm, 8.35pm City Of Angels
12.30pm, 3.15pm, 6pm, 8.40pm
Godzilla 6pm, 8.40pm Point Blank

BARNET
ODEON (0181-315 4210) High
Barnet City Of Angels 1.10pm, 3.40pm,

1.30pm, 4pm, 6.35pm, 8.55pm Red
Corner 12.30pm, 3.10pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.15pm,
8.45pm Sliding Doors 1.15pm, 4pm,
6.25pm, 8.50pm

ODEON WEST END
(0181-315 4221) Leicester Square
The Object Of My Affection 1pm,
3.30pm, 6.05pm, 8.40pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1.30pm, 3.50pm, 6.25pm,
8.45pm

PHOENIX CINEMA
(0181-444 6789) East Finchley Live
Flesh 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm

PLAZA
(0171-437 1234) Piccadilly Circus
Deep Impact 3.10pm, 5.50pm, 8.30pm
Godzilla 6pm, 9pm Jackie Brown
7.40pm Mojo 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.20pm
Touch 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.15pm

RENOIR
(0171-837 8402) Russell Square Love
And Death On Long Island 2.35pm,
4.40pm, 6.50pm, 9pm The Taste Of
Cherry 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.40pm,
8.50pm

RIO CINEMA
(0171-254 6677) BR: Dalston Kingsland
Fly Away Home Tue 4.15pm Love And
Death On Long Island 4.30pm, 9.10pm
The Taste Of Cherry 2.15pm, 6.45pm

RITZY CINEMA
(0171-737 2121/733 2229) BR/BR
Brixton As Good As It Gets 1pm,
3.35pm Grease (20th Anniversary
Edition) 4.25pm, 6.45pm, 9.05pm Kurt
& Courtney 2.40pm, 4.50pm, 7pm,
9.10pm Love And Death On Long
Island 2.10pm, 4.30pm, 6.50pm,
9.15pm (+ Short: lovebirds) Oscar And
Lucinda 2.05pm Sliding Blade 3.15pm,
6pm, 8.50pm

SCREEN ON BAKER STREET
(0171-486 0036) Baker Street Love
And Death On Long Island 2.35pm,
4.40pm, 6.50pm, 9pm The Object Of
My Affection 3.30pm, 6.20pm, 8.45pm

SCREEN ON THE GREEN
(0171-228 3520) Angel/Highway &
Islington Kurt & Courtney 3pm, 5pm,
7pm, 9pm

SCREEN ON THE HILL
(0171-435 3366) Belsize Park Love
And Death On Long Island 3.30pm,
6.30pm, 8.50pm (+ Short: Toy Boys)

UCI WHITELEYS
(0171-792 3332) Bayswater City Of
Angels 3.15pm, 6pm, 8.45pm, 4pm,
6.45pm, 9.30pm Girls' Night 2.40pm,
4.50pm, 7pm Godzilla 6pm, 6.15pm,
8.55pm, 9.10pm Grease (20th
Anniversary Edition) 3.10pm Mad
City 3.30pm, 6.35pm, 9.25pm The
Object Of My Affection 3pm, 6.55pm,
9.50pm Sliding Blade 3pm,
6.25pm, 9.15pm Sliding Doors 4.10pm
Touch 2.15pm, 4.40pm, 7pm, 9.20pm
The Wedding Singer 7pm, 9.30pm,
6.55pm, 9.35

VIRGIN CHELSEA
(0171-907 0710) Sloane
Square/South Kensington Godzilla 6pm,
9pm The Object Of My Affection
2.15pm, 5.15pm, 8.30pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 6.30pm,
8.45pm Sliding Blade 12noon, 3pm,
6pm, 9pm The Wedding Singer 2pm

VIRGIN FULHAM ROAD
(0171-907 0711) South
Kensington The Big Lebowski 1.30pm,
4.10pm, 7pm, 9.30pm City Of Angels
1.30pm, 5.30pm, 8.20pm Godzilla
6.30pm, 9.20pm Grease (20th
Anniversary Edition) 1pm, 3.30pm
Kiss Or Kill 2pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm
Mad City 1.10pm, 3.20pm, 6.20pm, 9pm
Sliding Doors 2.30pm, 5.55pm, 8.40pm

VIRGIN HAYMARKET
(0171-907 0712) Piccadilly Circus
Kiss Or Kill 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.40pm
Love And Death On Long Island 2pm,
4.15pm Sliding Blade 2pm, 5pm, 8pm

VIRGIN TROADERO
(0171-907 0716) Piccadilly Circus City
Of Angels 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.20pm,
9pm Dark City 12.20pm, 2.30pm,
4.45pm, 7pm, 9.20pm Grease (20th
Anniversary Edition) 1pm, 3.30pm,
6.10pm, 9pm Gora In Seven 12.40pm,
3.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.50pm Mimic 12.50pm,
3.20pm, 6.10pm, 9pm Soul Food
12.30pm, 3pm, 5.40pm, 8.50pm

WARNER VILLAGE WEST
(0171-437 3347) Leicester Square
The Big Lebowski 1.15pm, 2.50pm,
5pm City Of Angels 1.40pm, 4.40pm,
7.40pm, 10.40pm Kiss Or Kill 1.20pm,
3.20pm, 6.20pm, 9.20pm, 12.20pm,
3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm, 11.40pm,
4.45pm, 7pm, 9.15pm The Object Of
My Affection 3.20pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1.25pm, 3.30pm,
6.05pm, 8.45pm Sliding Blade 1.45pm,
5.15pm, 8.30pm The Wedding Singer
12.05pm, 2.20pm, 4.35pm, 6.50pm,
9.15pm

CINEMA
LONDON LOCALS

ACTON PARK ROYAL WARNER
VILLAGE (0181-896 0066) Park
Royal As Good As It Gets 6.40pm,
9.20pm City Of Angels 1.10pm, 3.40pm,
6.10pm, 8.40pm Deep Impact 4.10pm,
4.20pm Godzilla 6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm,
9pm, 9.30pm, 10pm Grease (20th
Anniversary Edition) 1.30pm, 4pm,
6.20pm, 8.50pm Gora In Seven 1.30pm,
3.30pm, 1.20pm, 9.45pm Mad City
2.40pm, 5.10pm, 7.40pm, 10.10pm,
Mimic 4.50pm The Object Of My
Affection 2.20pm Six Days, Seven
Nights 2pm, 4.20pm, 6.50pm, 9.10pm
Sliding Doors 1.50pm Soul Food
1.20pm, 3.50pm, 3.15pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1pm, 3.45pm, 6.30pm,
9.15pm 11.45pm

ODEON CAMDEN TOWN
(0181-315 4229) Camden Town City
Of Angels 1.15pm, 3.40pm, 6.05pm,
8.30pm Kiss Or Kill 1.20pm, 2.30pm,
4.45pm, 7pm, 9.15pm The Object Of
My Affection 3.20pm Six Days,
Seven Nights 1.25pm, 3.30pm,
6.05pm, 8.45pm Sliding Blade 1.45pm,
5.15pm, 8.30pm The Wedding Singer
12.05pm, 2.20pm, 4.35pm, 6.50pm,
9.15pm

ODEON MEZZANINE
(0181-315 4215) Leicester Square As
Good As It Gets 3.45pm, 6.25pm,
9.05pm L.A. Confidential - Meet
Frank, Daniel & Laurence 6.40pm,
9.05pm Point Blank 6.30pm, 8.55pm

ODEON SWISS COTTAGE
(0181-315 4220) Swiss Cottage The
Big Lebowski 12.45pm, 3.25pm,
6.05pm, 8.35pm City Of Angels
12.30pm, 3.15pm, 6pm, 8.40pm
Godzilla 6pm, 8.40pm Point Blank

BARNET
ODEON (0181-315 4210) High
Barnet City Of Angels 1.10pm, 3.40pm,

THEATRE
WEST END

Ticket availability details are for today:
times and prices for the week running
times include intervals. — Seats at all
prices — Seats at one price only —
Returns only Matinees — [1]: Sun, [2]:
Tue, [4]: Wed, [5]: Thu, [6]: Fri, [7]: Sat

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OAS YOU LIKE IT
Shakespeare's witty comedy contrasting
the court and the natural world. The
Globe New Globe Walk, SE1 (0171-401
9818) London Bridge. In rep, tonight
7.30pm, ends 8 Sep, £5-£20, concs avail-
able, 180 mins.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lavish family musical based on Disney's
cartoon version of the fairy tale. Dominion
Theatre Tottenham Court Road, W1
(0171-656 1888) Tottenham Court Road,
Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat
2.30pm, £17.50-£32.50, 150 mins.

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy
Russell's musical melodrama. Phoenix
Theatre Charing Cross Road, WC2
(0171-369 1733) Leicester Square,
Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Thu 3pm, Sat
4pm, £10.50-£29.50, 165 mins.

BUDDY Musical biopic
tracing the brief life of Buddy Holly. Strand
Theatre Aldwych, WC2 (0171-390
8900) Covent Garden/Charing Cross.
Tue-Thu 8pm, Fri 5.30pm & 8.30pm, Sat
5pm & 8.30pm, mats Sun 4pm, £5.75-
£30, 160 mins.

CATS Lloyd Webber's musical
version of T.S. Eliot's poems. New
London Theatre Park Street, WC2
(0171-405 0072) Covent
Garden/Holborn. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats
Tue & Sat 3pm, £12.50-£32.50,
165 mins.

CHICAGO Ruthie Henshall stars
in this hit Broadway musical.
Adelphi Theatre Maiden Lane, WC2
(0171-344 0055) Charing Cross.
Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Wed & Sat 2.30pm,
£16-£36 (inc booking fee), 130 mins.

CLOSER Superb study of
contemporary sexual relationships from
Deaf's Choice author Patrick Marber.
Lyric Theatre Shaftesbury Avenue, W1
(0171-494 5045) Piccadilly Circus,
Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm,
£5-£27.50, 140 mins.

**THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
(ABRIDGED)** Reduced Shakespeare
Company fast-forward through 37 plays.
Criterion Theatre Piccadilly Circus,
W1 (0171-369 1747) Piccadilly
Circus. Wed-Sat 8pm, mats Thu 3pm, Sat
5pm, Sun 4pm, £9.50-£20, 120 mins.

DR DOLITTLE Philip Schofield
talks to the animals in this new stage
adaptation featuring Jim Henson Puppets.
Laurel's Apollo Hammersmith Duesen
Caroline Street, W6 (0171-416 6022)
Hammersmith. Mon-Sat 7.30pm,
mats Wed & Sat 2.30pm, £10-£32.50,
150 mins.

GREASE Marissa Dunlop stars
in the stage version of the hit film.
Cambridge Theatre Earlham Street, WC2
(0171-494 5080) Covent Garden.
Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm,
£10-£30, 150 mins.

**HOW I LEARNED TO
DRIVE** Paula Vogel's drama about the
incestuous relationship between a teenager
and her uncle. Dominion Warehouse
Earlham Street, WC2 (0171-369 1732)
Covent Garden. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats
Thu & Sat 4pm, ends 8 Aug, £12-£16,
concs available, 95 mins.

THE ICEMAN COMETH
Kew Spacey stars in Eugene O'Neill's
classic testimony to the power of dreams.
Old Vic The Old Vic (0171-928 7616/cc
420 0000) BR/ Waterloo. Mon-Sat
7pm, mats Sat 1.30pm, ends 1 Aug, £5-
£20, 180 mins.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND
Christopher Cazenove and Kate O'Mara
in Peter Hall's acclaimed production of
Wilde's comedy. Albany Theatre St
Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-369 1730/cc
867 1111) Leicester Square. Mon-Sat
7.45pm, mats Thu 3pm, Sat 4pm, £7.50-
£29.50, 165 mins.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS
Stephen Daldry's widely-acclaimed
production of J.B. Priestley's thriller.
Garrick Theatre Charing Cross Road,
WC2 (0171-494 5085) Leicester
Square. Mon-Fri 7.45pm, Sat 8.15pm,
mats Wed 2.30pm, Sat 5pm, £10-£25,
110 mins.

KAT AND THE KINGS
Musical set in 1950s Cape Town.
Vaudeville Theatre Strand, WC2 (0171-
836 9337) BR/ Charing Cross. Mon-Thu
7.45pm, Fri-Sat 5.30pm & 8.30pm, ends
1 Aug, £5-£25-£27.50, 130 mins

**A LETTER OF
RESIGNATION** Hugh Whitemore's
play about the Plomford affair and political
corruption. Savoy Theatre Strand WC2
(0171-836 8886/cc 836 0479) Charing
Cross. Embankment. Mon-Sat
7.45pm, mats Wed 3pm, Sat 4pm,
£12.50-£28, 135 mins

MAJOR BARBARA Jemma
Redgrave and Peter Bowles star.
Piccadilly Theatre Denman Street, W1
(0171-369 1734) Piccadilly Circus,
in rep, today 2.30pm & 7.45pm,
continuing, £3.50-£27.50, 180 mins

**THE MAN WHO CAME TO
DINNER** Classic American comedy
of errors from Steppenwolf
Theatre. Barbican Theatre Barbican
Centre, EC2 (0171-638 8891) Barbican,
Moorgate. In rep, tonight 7pm,
ends 25 Jul, £5-£27.

**THE MERCHANT OF
VENICE** Shakespeare's cross
cultural comedy. The Globe New Globe
Walk, SE1 (0171-401 9919) London
Bridge. In rep, today 2pm, ends 19 Sep,
£5-£20, concs available, 180 mins.

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM** Classic tale of love and con-
fusion set in the fairy kingdom. Open Air
Theatre Regent Park, NW1 (0171-486
2431/cc 436 1933) Baker Street. In
rep, today 2.30pm & 7.45pm, ends 5 Sep,
£3-£30, 165 mins

LES MISERABLES Musical
dramatisation of Victor Hugo's
masterpiece. Palace Theatre Shaftesbury
Avenue, W1 (0171-434 0909)
Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Sat 7.30pm,
mats Thu & Sat 2.30pm, £7-£32.50,
195 mins

MISS SAIGON Musical which
reels the Madam Butterfly tragedy in
Vietnam. Theatre Royal, Drury Lane
Catherine Street, WC2 (0171-494 5060)
Covent Garden. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats
Wed & Sat 3pm, £5.75-£32.50, 165 mins.

THE MOUSETRAP Agatha
Christie's whodunnit. St Martin's
Theatre West Street, WC2 (0171-436
1443) Leicester Square. Mon-Sat 7.30pm,
mats Tue 2.45pm, Sat 5pm, £9-£23,
195 mins.

**MUCH ADO ABOUT
NOTHING** Decan Donnell directs
Cheek By Jowl in a new production of
Shakespeare's classic. Playhouse
Theatre Northumberland Avenue, WC2
(0171-339 4401/cc 316 4747) Embankment.
Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Thu & Sat 2.30pm,
ends 25 Jul, £10-£22, 120 mins.

**THE OLD NEIGH
BORHOOD** David Mamet's new
play is directed by Patrick Marber. Royal
Court Theatre (at the Duke of York's)
St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-565 5000)
Leicester Square. Mon-Sat 7.30pm,
mats Sat 3.30pm, £5-£19.50, benches
10p, Mon - all seats £5, 90 mins.

**THE PHANTOM OF THE
OPERA** Andrew Lloyd Webber's
musical. Her Majesty's Theatre
Haymarket, SW1 (0171-494 5400/cc 344
4444) Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Sat
7.45pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm, £10-
£32.50, 150 mins.

POPCORN Lawrence Boswell
directs Ben Elton's satirical comedy
violin. Apollo Theatre Shaftesbury
Avenue, W1 (0171-494 5070) Tottenham
Court Road. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats
Wed 3pm, Sat 4pm, £5.50-£23.50, 150
mins.

**THE REAL INSPECTOR
HOUND & BLACK COMEDY**
Double bill of drama from Tom Stoppard
and Peter Shaffer, directed by Gregory
Doran. Comedy Theatre Fenton Street,
SW1 (0171-369 1731) Piccadilly
Circus/Leicester Square. Mon-Sat 7.30pm,
mats Wed & Sat 3pm, £7.50-£27.50,
165 mins.

RENT Musical inspired by La
Bohème and set in modern day New York.
Shaftesbury Theatre Shaftesbury
Avenue, WC2 (0171-379 5399) Holborn/Tottenham
Court Road. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm,
£12.50-£32.50, 160 mins.

ROYAL NATIONAL THEATRE
OLIVIER: OKLAHOMA! Rodgers and
Hammerstein's classic musical,
featuring the song "Oh What A Beautiful
Morning". In rep, tonight 7.15pm,
ends 3 Oct.

**LYTTLETON: The Prime Of Miss
Jean Brodie** Fiona Shaw stars as the
Scottish schoolmistress in this new
adaptation of the classic novel by Muriel
Spark. In rep, tonight 7.30pm,
ends 1 Oct, 150 mins.

COTTESLOE: Copenhagen
New drama from Michael Frayn about the
discovery of the atom. In rep, tonight
2.30pm & 7.30pm, continuing, 145
mins. Olivier & Lyttelton: £8-£27,
Okla! £12-£32.50, Cottesloe: £12-
£18, South Bank, SE1 (0171-452 3000)
Embankment.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER- 1970s musical featuring songs by
Bee Gees, including their new tracks.
London Palladium Argyll Street, W1
(0171-494 5020) Oxford Circus.
Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat
2.30pm, £10-£32.50, 135 mins.

**SHAKESPEARE'S
VALENTINE</**

